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## X BRINGS IN MEASURES TO PREVENT INAPPROPRIATE EDITING USING GROK

**Elon Musk has introduced technological measures to prevent its AI platform, Grok, from creating inappropriate or obscene content**

### ONLY PAID SUBSCRIBERS CAN HAVE EDIT OPTION

Restrictions for explicit material apply to all users, including paid subscribers. However, the platform said that image creation and the ability to edit images via Grok are now only available to paid users. The Indian government warned X, asking it to comply with the IT Act, 2000. Countries like Brazil, Malaysia, and Australia have initiated inquiries.

### CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CONTENT BANNED

- Action will be taken against high-priority violative content, including Child Sexual Abuse Material and non-consensual nudity
- Accounts seeking Child Sexual Exploitation materials will be reported to to law enforcement authorities as necessary. This does not change its existing safety protocols, X said in a statement | P12

**600**

ACCOUNTS DELETED AND 3,500 PIECES OF OBSCENE CONTENT REMOVED

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

# Apex court issues notice to Didi

ED moves top court alleging obstruction during its raids on TMC's political consultant

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

WEST Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee suffered a setback in the Supreme Court on Thursday when it issued notices to her and senior state officials on the petition filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in connection with its raids on I-PAC, Trinamool Congress's political consultant. The court asked Banerjee, along with DGP Rajeev Kumar and Kolkata Police Commissioner Manoj Kumar Verma, among others, to respond within two weeks.

The bench, headed by Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra and also comprising Justice Vipul Pancholi, used strong words about the clashes between Central and state agencies, saying that if the court didn't examine the issue, it could create lawlessness in the country. "We are of the prima facie view that the present petition has raised a serious issue relating to the investigation by the ED or other Central agencies and interference by state agencies. There would be lawlessness in the country if the court doesn't examine the issues raised by the ED," it said.

The court also stayed the FIRs registered by the state against ED officials.

The ED petition alleged interference by the West Bengal government and its agencies in the raids the probe agency had launched against I-PAC and its director Pratik Jain. The SC also issued notices to the Centre along with asking the state government to preserve the CCTV footage of the premises searched in the January 8 raids.

The ED had first filed a petition in the Calcutta High Court on January 9, but a large number of people gathered in the courtroom, creating commotion. It prompted the court to adjourn the matter. The Supreme Court took a strong view of the unmanageable crowd, after Solicitor General Tushar Mehta said, "I have placed on record WhatsApp chats of the law wing of the party in power. This was not spontaneous, and they were instructed by the legal cell of the party to go there." Justice Mishra then remarked, "Come everyone? As if it's Jantar Mantar!" Through a fresh plea filed, the ED sought the suspension of top officials of West Bengal police, including Kumar, alleging that they aided Banerjee in the obstruction of investigation and evidence theft.

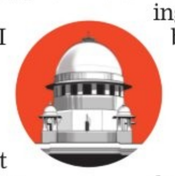
Banerjee's counsel Kapil Sibal, however, argued that the ED wanted to obtain access to information pertaining to the Trinamool Congress strategy for the upcoming election, which was in the I-PAC premises, as the political consultancy is the campaign partner of the party. Sibal said that Banerjee went to the I-PAC office after receiving information that certain unauthorised persons had entered Jain's office. He added she went there as the head of the party, and not as the chief minister. P10

SC TO ELECTION COMMISSION

# Publish names taken out of draft Kerala rolls

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to make public the names of people excluded from the draft electoral rolls published after the special intensive revision (SIR) process in Kerala, so that affected voters can raise objections. The SC also asked the poll panel to consider extending the deadline for filing objections, preferably by two weeks.



A Bench headed by CJI Surya Kant was hearing a batch of petitions challenging the SIR exercise in Kerala. The petitioners contended that the revision process, as carried out, risks disenfranchising a large number of voters due to technical errors and the absence of a robust grievance redressal mechanism.

During the hearing, the counsel for the petitioners submitted that nearly 24 lakh names had been deleted from the draft rolls.It was argued that while voters are required to file objections against deletions, the list of excluded voters has not been made available, denying them a chance to contest the removal of their names. "They have to list objections, but the list of those persons deleted is not available. Now people have to go back and file objections stating why have you deleted me... that opportunity is missing for us," a lawyer said.

Taking note of the submissions, the SC directed that the names of excluded voters, if not already displayed, must be exhibited at public offices in villages, and uploaded on official websites. "Meanwhile, having regard to the difficulty being experienced by the people at large, the ECI may consider the desirability of extending the date," the court said.

The petitioners said that several voters were wrongly marked as deceased or shown as residing outside the state. The lack of transparency, they argued, has caused hardship, particularly in rural areas. The Bench was told that the ECI had earlier extended the deadline for submission of enumeration forms from December 4 to 11, and then to December 18, after the court's observations.

The petitioners include the State of Kerala and senior political leaders.

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## HC: Don't carry out devpt work at Roerich Estate

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Bengaluru

THE Karnataka High Court directed the state government to ensure that no development activities are carried out on the ground towards the eco tourism and cultural hub at the Svetoslav Roerich and Devika Rani Roerich Estate at Tataguni on Kanakapura Road in the city.

A division bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice CM Poonacha passed the interim order after hearing the public interest litigation filed by RR Nagar I Care Trust, represented by its founder-trustee Niveditha Sunkad.

The state government sought two weeks to file a statement of objections to the petition. P2

Demonstration erupts in Berlin in support of the ongoing protests in Iran | PTI

EXPRESS READ

### FIR against YouTuber for filming in tiger reserve

Kumbarwada: The forest department has filed an FIR against a 'YouTuber' for trespassing into the core area in Kali Tiger Reserve, making videos and posting them on social media. The department has served a notice to the violator but he is incommunicado | P6

### BMC: Exit polls predict win for BJP-Shiv Sena

Mumbai: All exit polls predicted a clear sweep for the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance in Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) polls, which took place on Thursday, and a defeat of the Shiv Sena (UBT)-Maharashtra Navnirman Sena | P10

# Evacuation of Indians stranded in Iran planned

JAYANTH JACOB @ New Delhi

THE government has begun drawing up contingency plans to bring back Indian nationals stranded in Iran amid mounting safety concerns as unrest continues in large parts of the country, sources said. "In view of the evolving situation in Iran, the External Affairs Ministry is making preparations to facilitate the return of Indian nationals who wish to travel back to India," sources said.

Students from Golestan University, along with a small number from Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Tehran University of Medical Sciences, are expected to form the first evacuation batch. Sources said the first group of evacuees could be flown out as early as Friday, subject to security clearances and the availability of flight routes.

"All students have been registered, the Indian embassy has collected their details and passports, and the first batch has been told to remain ready by 8 am," the Jammu and Kashmir Students Association said.

The Indian embassy in Tehran has intensified efforts to contact Indian students and other nationals to assess who wishes to return. Officials said the exercise is being carried out largely through physical outreach, as internet services remain suspended in several areas and telecommunication networks are unreliable.

Evacuation planning is being complicated by disruptions to air travel. Air India has cancelled three US-bound flights and warned of possible delays on some Europe-bound services after Iran shut its airspace for four hours. Iranian airspace has since been reopened.

**First batch ready**

Students from Golestan University, along with Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences and Tehran University of Medical Sciences, are expected to form the first evacuation batch

The situation has drawn political attention in India, with J&K CM Omar Abdullah talking to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. "I was assured that all steps are being taken to safeguard the interests of our students," he said.

Iran, however, has sought to downplay the crisis. Iran's Ambassador to India Mohammad Fathali said the situation in the country is "under control".

# Recalled midair, AI flight engine sucks in baggage container

S LALITHA @ New Delhi

IN a rare and alarming incident at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA) on Thursday morning, an Air India Airbus A350-900 faced a double setback—engine damage after ingesting a cargo container, just hours after being rerouted midair due to the sudden closure of Iranian airspace.

Flight AI101, bound for New York with 240 passengers on board, took off at 3:13 am but was forced to return to Delhi after Iran closed its airspace for four hours. The aircraft landed safely at 5:47 am, only to encounter another misfortune while taxiing toward the apron. According to DGCA sources, Engine No. 2 ingested a cargo container, causing damage.

All the passengers were safe, but for AI101, Thursday proved to be a day of unexpected turbulence—first in the skies over Iran, and then on the taxiways of Delhi airport.

Investigations indicate that ground handling company Bird Worldwide Flight Services was moving containers near Bay 242 when one toppled onto the taxiway after a dolly wheel came off. Though the operator quickly cleared nearby equipment, the container remained there and was sucked into the engine intake.

Air India described the incident as a "foreign object strike in foggy conditions" and added that the aircraft has been safely positioned at stand 244. Repairs and a detailed probe are underway, and the airline warned of potential disruptions on select long-haul A350 routes.

# 'Surat sarees' a death knell for DB Pur weavers

ASHWINI M SRIPAD
@ Doddaballapur (Bengaluru Rural)

FOR over a century, thousands of weavers in and around Bengaluru Rural district's Doddaballapur who depended solely on weaving silk for their livelihood, have now reached a dead end.

Shifting from handlooms to power looms, and from pure silk to semi-silk, they are struggling with an identity crisis as Gujarat-based mill owners produce Surat sarees mimicking Doddaballapur silk sarees, but at a much lower price. This has pushed traditional Doddaballapur sarees out of the market. As a result, many of the 40,000 loom owners in and around Doddaballapur town are now forced to take up piecemeal works for others, earning a daily wage of just Rs 100 to Rs 200.

The century-old weaving tradition was started by Devanga weavers community, whose population is considerably large in Doddaballapur, on handlooms. The silk sarees woven here were even exported. In 1948, the town got its power connection and the weavers slowly moved to power looms, enjoying high demand. Sarees would weigh 850gm to 1 kilo, with heavy zari borders, mostly preferred for weddings and auspicious occasions. These sarees were sold at Dharmavaram in Andhra Pradesh, besides Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

At weaver KC Dwarakish's house, four looms greet visitors as they enter. "Our day begins at 6.30am and continues until 8.30pm. We are the owners as per records, be it the house, electricity bills, or power looms, all are in our names. Unlike earlier, we no longer weave sarees and sell them directly. Instead, we take up piecemeal work from agents. They provide raw material and we weave as per their instructions," he says. P4

KC Dwarakish weaves 20 metres of cloth a day on one of his looms. He has four looms at his residence | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

**ALMANAC TODAY**
Friday: 16.01.2026 • Year: Vishwavasu • Ayana: Uththarayana • Ritu: Himanth • Masa: Pausha • Paksha: Krishna • Tithi: Thrayodasi 9.58 pm • Nakshatra: Moola (Wholeday) • Moon in Makara rashi • Rahukaala: 10:30 am to 12:00 pm • Gulikakala: 07:30 am to 09:00 am • Yamaganda: 01:30 pm to 03:00 pm

**WEATHER**
MIN 16°C | MAX 30°C
FORECAST: Sunny
Sunrise 06.45 am | Sunset 06.13 pm | Moonrise 04.38 am | Moonset 04.04 pm

## 7th train joins Yellow Line, frequency now 10 mins

Bengaluru: The Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) on Thursday introduced the seventh train to Namma Metro's Yellow Line, bringing the peak-hour frequency on weekdays from 13 to 10 minutes. BMRCL said the move is aimed at easing crowding and offering more reliable service during high-demand hours. On Sundays, the peak-hour interval will also see a marginal improvement, with trains running every 14 minutes instead of the earlier 15 minutes. The corporation clarified that while frequency has been enhanced, there will be no changes to the first and last train timings from the terminal stations at RV Road and Bommasandra on any day. **ENS**

# Why Kanakapura stinks? SWM not disposing legacy waste, Upa Lokayukta steps in

● CMC officials say waste dumped at Aralalu plant since 2010 ● Need six months to process legacy waste

**YATHIRAJU** @Bengaluru

THE improper disposal of waste has led to the piling up of 16,994 tonnes of legacy waste for more than a decade at Aralalu Solid Waste Management Plant in Kanakapura town, causing a serious threat to environment as well as people.

Upa Lokayukta Justice KN Phaneendra after an inspection held that the authorities of Kanakapura City Municipal Council (CMC), Karnataka State Pollution Board (KPSCB) and Bengaluru South District have not adhered to the Solid Waste Management Rules. He stated that prima facie their inaction amounts to maladministration defined under Section 2(10) of the Karnataka Lokayukta Act.

The CMC officials said that the waste had been dumped at the plant since 2010. The plant is receiving daily 20 tonnes of solid waste, of which 10 to 11 tonnes is wet waste, and the remaining is dry waste. Around 5 to 6 tonnes of manure is being processed daily from the plant. The legacy waste was not disposed for several years due to lack of screening machines for the process. To process the legacy waste, six months are required, the officials told Upa Lokayukta.

The Upa Lokayukta also found there was no pipeline or drain system for leachate and stinking smell emanating because of rotten legacy waste. Flies, mosquitoes and insects are found in large numbers. The residents living around the plant complained him that the stinking waste causing pollution, leading to the breeding centre for flies and mosquitoes results in children and elderly people residing in the BGS Layout within 500 meters of the plant, falling ill with Dengue and Malaria.

The Upa Lokayukta noticed that the plant has become a haven for stray dogs. Hundreds of dogs inside the unit are going on a biting spree in the locality. The residents complained that they used to bite not only people but also cattle. This has become a serious menace. Therefore, people cannot walk in the vicinity.

Suggesting to organise a health screening camp for the staff of the plant, providing safety kits for them at regular intervals, and also a health camp for the people residing in the vicinity, the Upa Lokayukta also directed the animal husbandry department to conduct a camp for screening of cattle health and get the quality of milk of buffalo and cow tested from the lab. He also instructed to examine the quality of soil, air and drinking water around the plant scientifically.

A suomoto case has been registered against CMC Commissioner Srinivas, Assistant Executive Engineers Dhananjaya (Environment), Sagar (Civil), Junior Engineer Sridevi, Senior Health Inspector Venkatesh, and also against Environment Officer Manjunath, KSPCB. The Upa Lokayukta has directed them to take up immediate remedial measures and submit their reply by January 28.

**Around 5 to 6 tonnes of manure is being processed daily from the plant. The legacy waste was not disposed for several years due to lack of screening machines for the process**
— Official

Top: Upa Lokayukta Justice K N Phaneendra during a surprise visit recently to the Aralalu Solid Waste Management Plant in Kanakapura. Scattered waste at the plant

# Garbage vehicles outside school make students ill

**RASHMI PATIL** @Bengaluru

STUDENTS and staff at the 60-year-old Government Telugu High School in Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, have to suffer the foul smell of garbage and leachate that flows into the school campus almost every day. This site has turned into a black spot in Shivajinagar, with two tipper vans and compactors that collect garbage being parked near the compound wall of the school.

Mansoor Ahmed, school headmaster, said, "The contractor who collects garbage has parked compactors and tipper vans right at the compound wall and gate of the school. Most of the days, leachate flows inside the school campus and is a health hazard, especially for young children. People also throw garbage into the vans and compactor, with some waste ending up inside the school campus. The waste even starts decomposing in the compactors itself. Our students fall sick due to infection."

While government schools across the state are always in the news for poor infrastructure, this structure is a heritage building which is over 100 years old. Built with stone blocks, it has high walls and arched windows in ancient architecture style. According to historians in the city, the building became popular as a jail among people in the neighbourhood as it was a place where women were kept away from men (zenana). Even today, it is popularly known as 'jail school'. After the building was taken over by the government, it became a municipal office and was later turned into a school, with around 52 students on its rolls.

Ahmed added, "We had arguments with the contractor, and complained to various GBA and education department officials to prevent these vehicles from parking near the school. However, it hasn't yielded any positive results and the stink continues."

When *TNIE* contacted Block Education Officer Nasreen Taj, she clarified, "It has been three months since I took charge as BEO. The issue has come to my notice and as a department, we will make all efforts to coordinate with the GBA and move these compactors elsewhere. We will see that it is done soon."

Tipper vans parked outside the Government Telugu High School in Tasker Town, Shivajinagar | EXPRESS

**We had arguments with the contractor, and complained to various GBA and education department officials to prevent these vehicles from parking near the school. However, it hasn't yielded any positive results and the stink continues** — Mansoor Ahmed, school headmaster

# GBA to make city pedestrian friendly, launches 'Hejje-Gala'

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** @Bengaluru

THE Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), in association with WRI India, Walkaluru and Urban Morph, has rolled out Hejje-Gala, a three-month city-wide active mobility challenge aimed at encouraging walking, cycling and the use of public transport across Bengaluru. Designed as a friendly competition among city corporations, industry associations and corporates, the initiative also seeks citizen feedback to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure across all five city corporations.

Speaking at the launch, GBA Chief Commissioner Maheshwar Rao said the authority is on a mission to significantly improve footpaths across the city, and Hejje-Gala offers an opportunity to create healthy competition between the five corporations. Rao said Bengaluru must aspire to become one of the most walkable cities.

Rao noted that nearly 76 km of footpaths have already been upgraded by removing encroachments and ensuring continuity, making them accessible even for parents pushing prams in parts of north Bengaluru. The long-term goal, he said, is to expand high-quality footpaths to between 500 and 1,000 km over the next few years. While budgets will be provided, he stressed that motivating citizens to walk is equally critical. Explaining Hejje-Gala, Rao said the initiative nudges companies to encourage employees to walk and cycle through incentive systems, mobile apps and recognition. Corporates and city agencies that actively promote sustainable mobility will be rewarded, and public sector bodies are also expected to participate.

"Cities improve faster when everyday experiences of its citizens are heard. By capturing walking and cycling trips and ground-level feedback, Hejje-Gala can help identify what feels unsafe, what works well, and where improvements are most urgent," Arun Pai, Founder, Walkaluru said.

Corporate leaders welcomed the initiative. Madhusudhan Kulkarni, Head – Customer Solutions at AWS Industries, said the programme reflects unprecedented collaboration between the government and private sector to promote active mobility. Infosys Senior Vice President and ELCITA committee member Aruna Newton said mobility is a necessity, not a luxury, and responsible walking and cycling choices are essential for personal health and environmental sustainability.

Volunteers take part in a cyclothon during the launch of Hejje-Gala in front of Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Thursday | EXPRESS

## *Citizens must demand inclusive public spaces, says BBMP chief*

Bengaluru: BBMP Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao on Thursday said civic agencies should focus on creating greater public demand for accessible and inclusive public spaces that foster dialogue, creativity and community engagement. He was speaking at the inaugural event of the 10-day Creative City Bengaluru: Dialogues & Discoveries, organised by Artmantram. Rao said art often emerges naturally when people are encouraged to gather and engage in shared spaces. "If citizens begin asking for such spaces, it becomes easier for us to support and sustain these initiatives," he said. Speakers at the event emphasised that Bengaluru's commons extend beyond parks to include neighbourhood histories, cultural memory and everyday urban spaces. Architects and heritage experts cited Cubbon Park as an example of collective ownership that requires active public participation to survive. iscussions highlighted concerns such as the shrinking of accessible public spaces, weakening connections to local history and the need to reclaim shared commons beyond landmarks. Speakers highlighted neighbourhood memory, everyday streets and cultural practices as vital parts of the city's commons, stressing that art and heritage must move out of elite spaces and become part of daily public life through inclusive, people-led engagement. Panellists also discussed the role of AI in contemporary art. **ENS**

# Proposed project at Roerich Estate will affect elephant corridor: Petition

CONTINUED ON PAGE 1

FURTHER hearing was adjourned to February 16.

Deputy Solicitor General of India, appearing on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, submitted that no proposal has been received regarding the project in question and, at this stage, the project in question cannot be implemented.

The petitioner has challenged the state government's approval for an eco-tourism and cultural hub at the Roerich and Devika Rani Estate.

Contending that the estate, spread over 490 acres, is a deemed forest, the petitioner prayed the court to quash the state government's order dated December 24, 2024, giving approval for the setting up of the eco tourism and cultural hub there.

It was stated in the petition that the state government ought to have obtained permission from the central government before approving the proposal for the hub. The plan itself has several inconsistencies, and the proposed project will affect the elephant corridor that connects the Bannerghatta National Park as well as the movement of wildlife.

If the project is permitted, it aims to attract around 25,000 visitors a year, resulting in the destruction of the forest. Therefore, a direction was issued to the Svetoslav Roerich and Devika Rani Roerich Estate Board to conduct scientific profiling of environmental, ecological and wildlife aspects of the estate and develop a plan towards the object and intent of the acquisition of the estate.

A world-class museum was proposed at this site in the 490-acre Roerich and Devika Rani Estate | EXPRESS

## Horoscopes By Holiday

**HOLIDAY MATHIS**

**16th January : Under a Gregarious Sagittarius Moon The power of the right environment should not be underestimated. The gregarious Sagittarius moon would like to remind us that as long as we have the freedom to explore new social realms, we have the freedom to change our entire lives. Because often lives are changed in one moment: the moment you meet that certain someone new.**

**ARIES** (Mar 21 - Apr. 20)
You'll consider the time someone has spent to create or maintain the things that keep your world spinning, and you'll be humbled by their efforts. There's nothing you need to pay back, and plenty to pay forward.

**TAURUS** (Apr. 20 - May 20)
Difficult people will test your patience, and offering it will be worth your while. The steadier you are now, the richer you'll be later -- in dollars and in what matters even more.

**GEMINI** (May 21 - June 21)
You might be amazed at how few people listen as well as you. Today your listening will carry more weight than speaking. Tune in, notice subtleties and respond only when it feels essential. You'll discover something in your quiet observation that will help you in the weeks to come.

**CANCER** (June 22 - July 22)
Paradoxically, when you go at the problem as though help will never arrive, you realize you might not even need help because you are more amazing at this than you think -- and of course, that's when help will find you.

**LEO** (July 23 - Aug. 22)
Your magnetic presence is further amplified when you step into a role of generosity. As you offer attention, encouragement and kindness, people will respond in ways you can't predict, and your energy will multiply.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23 - Sept. 22)
The details you usually scrutinize so carefully can take a back seat today. Focus instead on the bigger picture, the patterns and the possibilities. Precision is valuable, but insight lives in the spaces between the lines.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23 - Oct. 23)
Collaboration will shine if you release the idea of perfect balance. Give more than you take, speak honestly and trust that harmony is a dynamic, living thing, and not a fixed equation. Mutual growth will surprise you.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24 - Nov. 21)
What draws your eye? What makes you hungry for more? What makes you want to reach out? Follow inspiration today because even the slightest movement toward your attractions will reward you.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22 - Dec. 21)
Curiosity is your favorite fuel -- better than protein shakes or coffee, better than romance, anger or competition. Curiosity opens new topics and bonds you with new people, and today has you finally and happily trying a path you've been hesitant about.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22 - Jan. 19)
Discipline is your signature, but today flexibility is your ally. As you loosen the grip on how things "should" unfold, opportunities just appear. Success sneaks in through doors you didn't plan to open.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20 - Feb. 18)
Today, your originality will be most effective because you pair it with practical action. Ideas are abundant, but of course execution is everything. Don't wait for perfection, because progress is the real magic.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19 - Mar 20)
There will be no shortage of ideas for you today. It's like the world is your think tank. Pick one and pursue it to the first milestone. Beginnings are a bit rocky no matter which choice you make, and that just goes with the territory.

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle ⬇

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| 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 4 |
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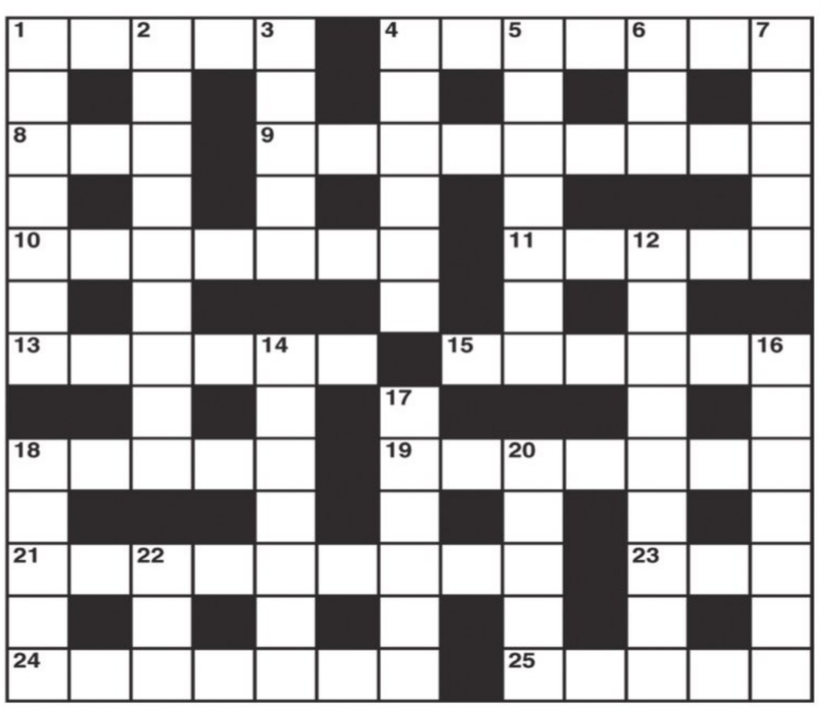
**SUDOKU HARD**

**TEST YOUR NUMBER CRUNCHING SKILL WITH OUR UNIQUE PUZZLE**

Fill in the grid with digits in such a manner that every row, every column and every 3X3 box accommodates the digits 1 to 9, without repeating any.



**CROSS WORD**

**ACROSS**
1 Shipping trade (5)
4 Making a comeback cover girl presents a problem (7)
8 Pull leg round chest (3)
9 Servicemen who have a job to do (4,5)
10 If it were eradicated there would be no complaints (7)
11 Forgets when unusually moist (5)
13 Wandered out of danger (6)
15 Naturally they support discussion on board (6)
18 A sheepish expression? (5)
19 Necessitate having to collect? (4,3)
21 On a forest manoeuvre not much later (4,5)
23 A small whisky for severe cold (3)
24 A plant from the list (7)
25 Bonnie's companion is a Scottish runner (5)

**DOWN**
1 Naval vessel which should be quarantined? (7)
2 Ill-used vehicle (9)
3 Cut of the cloth (5)
4 To stop in Rhodes is tempting (6)
5 Omitted but not right away (4,3)
6 Spoil a horse by docking its tail? (3)
7 The regions are as shown (5)
12 Yet it may be the product of an active imagination (4,5)
14 Passage taken from a district (7)
16 Weight on one's conscience? (7)
17 Cut down chesty complications (6)
18 Be determined to attack (5)
20 A song from Beverly Richards (5)
22 Charm exhibited by the Japanese (3)

**YESTERDAY'S SOLUTIONS**

**Across:** 1 Sacramento, 8 Stiff, 9 Leeward, 10 Useless, 11 Llama, 12 Ratify, 14 Assert, 17 Miser, 19 Evening, 21 Atelier, 22 Guess, 23 Perversity.

**Down:** 2 Aliment, 3 Rifle, 4 Molest, 5 Needles, 6 Osaka, 7 Advantages, 8 Square meal, 13 Furrier, 15 Evident, 16 Degree, 18 Sleep, 20 Edges.

**JUMBLE**

**UNSCRAMBLE THESE JUMBLES, ONE LETTER TO EACH SQUARE, TO FORM FOUR ORDINARY WORDS.**

BY DAVID L. HOYT AND JEFF KNUREK

NOIAP

EISRK

NARENB

GNEAET

Today's Guest JUMBLER is
RINA PICCOLO
co-cartoonist on
RHYMES WITH ORANGE
UNTIL YOU LEARN THE ROPES, LET'S START WITH THE SMALL STUFF.
lingerie
11-21
ON THE NEW CLERK'S FIRST DAY AT THE LINGERIE SHOP, THE MANAGER HAD HER USE A ---
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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: NIFTY PRICE MARKET CASINO
Answer: Because Angus is a baby, his favorite superhero is — MR. "INFANTASTIC"

Madikeri Rural Police arrested three people in connection with the murder of a man at an estate line house in Hoskeri village. The deceased has been identified as Buro, a native of West Bengal. His son, Prashanth, and two other estate workers were arrested. On January 11, following a drunken brawl, Prashanth allegedly assaulted his father with a log, killing him on the spot. The other two are charged with helping to shift the body

'MUNNA BHAI MBBS'-STYLE JOB SCAM

# 7 forest research staffers on the run

## Accused arranged for others to appear for recruitment examinations on their behalf

RAKSHITH GOWDA @Bengaluru

IN a major job fraud case, seven employees of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) have landed in legal trouble after it was found that they had allegedly secured jobs through impersonation and forged documents, and drew salaries for years at the Institute of Wood Science and Technology in Bengaluru. The scam's modus operandi is reminiscent of the 'Munna Bhai MBBS' movie.

According to the police, the accused had arranged for others to write recruitment examinations on their behalf using forged documents, cleared the exams, and secured jobs. Dinesh (28) from Haryana was appointed as a multi-tasking staff (MTS) member in 2019. HN Sudhir (29), Prince (29), Sonu (37), and Praveen (25), all from Haryana, along with Rajkumar (25) from Bihar, were appointed as MTS staff in 2022. A forest watcher, Sunil Kumar Yadav (33) from Bihar, joined the service in 2023. All seven were working at the ICFRE office in Malleswaram after securing a job fraudulently.

Following the registration of an FIR against them at the Sadashivanagar police station on January 8 under multiple sections of the BNS and the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, the accused have absconded, the police said.

### Signature mismatch

The police said that, in August 2025, Sadashivanagar police had arrested four people for allegedly impersonating a candidate in the MTS recruitment examination, who was caught while reporting for duty as his signature and photograph did not match. After the fraud surfaced, the ICFRE Secretary ordered verification of documents of candidates recruited to MTS and other posts at the Institute of Wood Science and Technology.

During an internal inquiry, discrepancies were found in the records of the seven accused. Their daily attendance signatures did not match the signatures made during the examination. Further analysis of CCTV footage from the examination dates revealed that the individuals who appeared for the exams did not match the accused employees.

Subsequently, their documents, answer sheets, and signatures were sent to the State Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) in Madiwala. After technical analysis, FSL experts confirmed discrepancies in the documents and signatures. Based on this, ICFRE Director Dr. Shakti Singh Chauhan filed a complaint against the seven employees who had secured jobs through fraudulent means, the police said.

# KIA Customs busts three drug rackets in a week

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

CUSTOMS officers at Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) announced that three major drug busts have been carried out over the last few days.

On January 10, 700 blots (15.123 g) of LSD were intercepted, on January 13, 2.18 kg of hydroponic ganja was intercepted, and on Thursday (January 15), 6.24 kg of hydroponic ganja was intercepted.

The LSD shipment, which was estimated to be worth Rs 21 lakhs, was concealed in a courier from the Netherlands, and was seized at the KIA courier terminal.

The hydroponic ganja nabbed on January 13 was valued at Rs 76.3 lakhs, and was concealed in the luggage of a traveller flying in from Bangkok.

The shipments of hydroponic ganja seized on Thursday were estimated to be around Rs 2.18 crores, carried by two passengers flying in from Bangkok.

All three of the accused were arrested under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985.

SHADES OF FERVOUR

A man runs with bulls through flames as part of 'Kichchu Haisodu' ritual during Makara Sankranti celebrations at Kanakana Palya in Bengaluru on Thursday. Below: Children prepare sweet pongal on a Bengaluru street | NAGARAJA GADEKAL, SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

# Begur scrapyard burns for 4 hrs, none injured

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A major fire broke out at the scrapyard in Mailsandra, Begur police station limits, due to a suspected electrical short circuit on Thursday early morning. No casualties were reported in the incident.

The police said that, around 3 am, a fire broke out, suspected to be caused by an electrical short circuit. Migrant workers who lived in four sheds escaped unhurt. Fire and Emergency Services personnel rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after nearly four hours.

The police added that following a fire accident at the same area last year, the residents had been moved as a precautionary measure, but now the families had returned to the location.

EXPRESS READ

### St John's to host autism convention from Jan 21

Bengaluru: St John's Medical College Hospital's Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit and Centre for Advanced Autism and Developmental Disorders, along with partner organisations, will host the 3rd Global Autism Convention from January 21 to 25. Over 600 delegates, including clinicians, educators, therapists, policymakers, parents and self-advocates from India and abroad are expected to attend the event. It is slated to include keynote addresses, plenary sessions, workshops and panel discussions focusing on early identification of autism and other symptoms of neurodivergence, inclusive education, mental health, family support, policy development. Partner organisations include Association for Severe Handicaps and Autism, the Spastics Society of Karnataka, Shristi Special Academy, the Autism Society of India, Assisted Living for Autistic Adults (ALFAA) and Bubbles Centre for Autism.

# Two PU students on outing drown in Kabbalu Lake

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

A one-day outing by a group of students turned tragic after two teenagers drowned in Kabbalu Lake in Kanakapura taluk of Bengaluru South district on Wednesday.

The deceased have been identified as Dhanush (18) and Santosh (18), both second-year PU students of a private college in Jayanagar and residents of Uttarahalli.

According to the police, 11 students, including three girls from the same college, had visited the Kabbalu temple on Wednesday. After offering prayers and having lunch, the group went to Kabbalu Lake in the evening. None of them knew how to swim.

Dhanush reportedly slipped into deeper waters and began drowning. Santosh attempted to rescue him but also drowned in the process. Their friends alerted the police and Fire and Emergency Services personnel.

On Thursday afternoon, rescue personnel retrieved Dhanush's body, and the search operation to trace Santosh is on the police said.

XPRESS FOCUS SMD INITIATIVE

# Hi Life Exhibition in Bengaluru

Kick-start the New Year with Bengaluru's most awaited fashion destination. Hi Life Exhibition brings an inspiring curation of designer fashion, couture wear, fine jewellery, accessories, and lifestyle collections — perfect for refreshing your wardrobe for 2026. Discover new trends, statement pieces, and luxury craftsmanship in an elegant setting.

Join us on 16th & 17th January 2026, The Lalit Ashok, Bengaluru.

Minister of State for Information & Broadcasting L Murugan said an Inter-Ministerial Committee with members from the ministries of Home Affairs and Electronics and Information Technology, and departments for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade and Telecommunications, has been set up to strengthen anti-piracy strategies and formulate coordinated action plans

BATTLEFIELD K'TAKA

# HDK hints at returning to state politics to bring BJP-JDS to power

Union minister says objective is to establish a good government in Karnataka

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

UNION Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel HD Kumaraswamy on Thursday hinted at returning to state politics, stating that his aim is to establish a good government by BJP-JDS alliance in 2028.

"If anyone thinks that I am moving away from state politics, it is wrong. I will remain active in state politics. At the Centre, Prime Minister Modi has given me two major portfolios. I will decide when to return to state politics. There is no escaping from it," he told reporters here.

"People of Karnataka will decide where I should be. I will decide when to return to state politics based on their wishes," he said.

"We are part of NDA. There should be no room for any confusion within this alliance. Our objective is to establish a good government in the state," he said. Kumaraswamy claimed that he has been closely observing the state administration. "The state should have a good government and people should live peacefully. In this regard, I will accept whatever position the people of the state give me," he clarified.

Union Minister for Heavy Industries HD Kumaraswamy celebrates Makar Sankranti with the differently abled at his farmhouse in Bidadi on Thursday | EXPRESS

> **If anyone thinks that I am moving away from state politics, it is wrong. I will remain active in state politics. I will decide when to return to state politics. There is no escaping from it**
>
> HD Kumaraswamy, Union minister

### Sidlaghatta incident

Responding to Congress leader Rajiv Gowda allegedly threatening a woman officer (Sidlaghatta municipal commissioner), Kumaraswamy said that he had spoken to the state chief secretary in this regard.

"I have already spoken to the chief secretary. So far, no action has been taken," he added.

Terming it an unfortunate incident, he said workers and leaders of political parties should not misbehave with officials. Strict action should be taken against those indulging in such acts, he added.

Stating that officials are being pressured to carry out illegal activities, he said such things happen when the government is not functioning properly. If the system functions efficiently, such incidents will not happen. "If officials engage in illegal activities for promotions or postings, they will have to face the consequences," he said.

# Cong leader Rajiv Gowda lands in deep water, faces 2 FIRs

V VELAYUDHAM @Chikballapur

CONGRESS leader Rajiv Gowda, who is accused of allegedly threatening Siddlaghatta CMC Commissioner Amrutha, is now facing two separate criminal proceedings. Two FIRs have been registered against him -- one filed by Amrutha and the other by JDS leader N C Srinivasa Gowda for defaming legislator BN Ravi Kumar.

Based on Amrutha's complaint, the Siddlaghatta police registered a criminal case against Rajiv Gowda under various sections of BNS, including using criminal force against a public servant (132), threatening a public servant (224), intentional insult with intent to breach of peace (352), criminal intimidation 351(3) and abetting an offence that carries imprisonment (56).

In the complaint lodged by the JDS leader, the Siddlaghatta police registered a case under various sections of BNS, including intentional insult with intent to breach of peace (352) and spreading rumour 352(2). The complaint alleged that Rajiv Gowda defamed and insulted sitting JDS legislator Ravi Kumar, who represents the Siddlaghatta Assembly constituency.

Meanwhile, Rajiv Gowda released a video apologising for his statements. He said he never targeted the CMC commissioner and that he had got the banners installed for a function after taking permission from the commissioner.

It may be recalled that on Wednesday morning, Rajiv Gowda, who unsuccessfully contested on a Congress ticket in the last assembly elections from Siddlaghatta, called the CMC commissioner on phone and questioned her for removing the banner installed by him. Amrutha explained that the banner was removed as it obstructed smooth movement of traffic and no permission was taken to put it up. Rajiv Gowda then threatened the officer and verbally abused her. He also targeted MLA Ravi Kumar.

After the audio clip went viral, the CMC staff staged a protest demanding action against Rajiv Gowda. Even Higher Education and District Minister Dr M C Sudhakar showed his displeasure and condemned Rajiv Gowda.

### Cong seeks explanation from Rajiv Gowda

Bengaluru: The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) has issued notice seeking an explanation from party leader Rajiv Gowda, who is accused of threatening a woman officer in Sidlaghatta in Chikkaballapur district for removing a banner that was obstructing traffic. The show-cause notice issued by KPCC Working President GC Chandrashekar directed Gowda to furnish an explanation within a week, failing which the disciplinary committee would take further action against him. Gowda had unsuccessfully contested the 2023 Assembly polls as a Congress candidate. Chandrashekar stated that Gowda's conduct and the inappropriate manner in which he spoke to the City Municipal Council (CMC) commissioner is a violation of the party's discipline and caused embarrassment to the party. The opposition BJP and JD(S) have demanded that the state government direct the officials to immediately arrest Gowda for threatening a woman officer. **ENS**

# Events lined up for next two months could put leadership issue on ice

DEVARAJ B HIREHALLI
@ Bengaluru:

THE joint session of legislature, to be held from January 22 to 31, is likely to push the leadership issue on to the back burner, as Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his cabinet colleagues take on the opposition on the repeal of MNREGA and implementation of VB-G Ram-G by the Union government.

Many Congress MLAs said it is the norm that notice is issued at least 15 days prior to commencement of a joint legislature session, but this time, they were informed just seven days ahead. "The issue of change in leadership or reshuffle will certainly be off the agenda, especially as the session promises to be stormy," said a Congress MLA.

A series of events -- from Belagavi winter session which concluded on December 19 last to Congress party's 'MGNREGA Bachao Sangram' to the joint session -- has succeeded in deferring any decision on the leadership issue, on which DCM DK Shivakumar was keen, according to political analysts. The joint session will be followed by the 'Sadhana Samavesha' which marks 1,000 days of the Congress government in office, and is to be held tentatively at Haveri on February 13, and the Budget session is due to start in March.

Central Congress leaders will also be busy with the winter session of Parliament, especially LoP in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and LoP in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjuna Kharge. They will also be busy with assembly elections in Kerala, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and West Bengal expected to be held between March and April. Whether the high command takes a call on Karnataka's leadership remains moot.

### PRIYANK MEETS DKS

On the eve of DCM Shivakumar's scheduled visit to Delhi on Friday, to take part in a meeting for assembly polls in Assam, where he is an observer, RDPR and IT Minister Priyank Kharge met the latter in Bengaluru. "The high command will call both the CM and DCM when it decides," he later told reporters briefly on the tarmac at Mysuru airport on Tuesday, and AICC president Mallikajuna Kharge on Wednesday evening.

Meanwhile, Food and Civil Supplies Minister KH Muniyappa, who is expected to throw his hat in the ring if the high command considers making a Dalit leader the CM, on Thursday suggested that Mallikarjuna Kharge can take a call on the issue. "The Dalit CM issue is not new, it has been around for 20 years when Kharge was a strong contender. If the high command makes up its mind, it can happen... and Kharge is in a decision making capacity," he told reporters.

He said Kharge's efforts went in vain as he could not become CM after the party won 80 seats when he was KPCC president in 2008. "I cannot say much, but it is painful that while Dalits constitute 25 per cent of voters and 75 per cent of them vote for the Congress, representation is not adequate. I have conveyed this to the leadership," he stated. But he maintained that he is a disciplined soldier of the party and their goal is to bring the party back to power in 2028.

### BJP ready for joint session, says Ashoka

Bengaluru: With the ruling Congress announcing a joint session of the legislature from January 22 to discuss the Union government's decision of replacing MGNREGA with the VB-G RAM G Act, Opposition BJP is expected to hold a meeting on Sunday to chalk out its strategy. BJP leaders are now busy with preparations for a convention in Ballari on Saturday. Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka said that his party is ready for a debate on the rural employment guarantee scheme, claiming that the Centre has increased the number of guaranteed workdays from 100 to 125, benefiting a large number of poor families in rural areas. BJP legislators are expected to raise several issues, including the Sidlaghatta incident where a Congress leader allegedly threatened a woman officer (municipal commissioner) over removal of a banner in the town a few days ago, the Ballari firing case and demolition of houses built illegally on a piece of government land at Kogilu in Bengaluru. **ENS**

HEARTFELT PRAYER

DCM DK Shivakumar seeks blessings from a 'basava' (bull) near his residence in Sadashivanagar, Bengaluru, on Thursday | EXPRESS

# Harihar MLA booked for abusing Dalit farmer with casteist slurs

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@Davanagere

THE Davangere police have registered an FIR against Harihar MLA **BP Harish** on charges of abusing a Dalit farmer with casteist slurs. Based on a complaint by Kantaraj of Kadajji village in Davangere taluk, the police booked the MLA under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989.

Harish had gone to the village on January 12 to check on reports of illegal silt removal from a lake for use in agriculture. In the complaint, Kantaraj claimed that the MLA's car blocked his tractor when he was transporting silt from the lake. "I got down from the tractor and went to the car and saw MLA Harish in it. When I asked why you blocked my tractor, the MLA, his son and his PA got down from the car and asked me on what basis I was lifting the silt. They also reprimanded me rudely," the complainant said.

When Kantaraj made repeated requests to let go, they started to abuse him. The MLA too kept shouting at him, the complaint stated. "Then some people from our village came and even though the MLA, his son and his PA joined them and told them not to lift the soil, they reprimanded me again and abused my caste. Following this, the people near the lake came and formed a group. Then other villagers and elders pacified everyone and sent them away," Kantaraj said.

In his complaint, the farmer sought legal action against the MLA, his son and his PA for verbally abusing and threatening him. A case has been registered against the trio under sections 352 351 (2), 126 (2) of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act 1986.

Recently, a case was registered against Harish on charges of insulting and abusing Davangere SP Uma Prashanth.

# Farmers in distress, procure Bengal gram: Siddu to Centre

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

THE state government has urged the Centre to approve procurement of Bengal gram under the Price Support Scheme (PSS) at the earliest.

In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Agriculture Minister Shivaraj Singh Chouhan, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah stated that lakhs of Bengal gram farmers in the state are in distress. They are forced to sell their rabi produce for prices lower than the MSP of Rs 5,875 per quintal announced by the Centre.

Bengal gram is one of the state's prominent pulse crops cultivated on 9.24 lakh hectares of land with an estimated production of 6.27 lakh tonnes in Dharwad, Gadag, Belagavi, Vijayapura, Kalaburagi, Yadgir, Bidar, Raichur, Koppal, Ballari, Chitradurga, Bagalkote, Davanagere and Chikkamagaluru districts, he said.

Despite the Centre declaring Rs 5,875 per quintal as MSP for Bengal gram for 2026-27 rabi season, prices in major APMC yards in the state rule between Rs 4,260 and Rs 5,813 per quintal. "In many places, farmers are reportedly forced to sell their produce for Rs 800 to Rs 1,200 below the MSP," the CM said.

He urged the Centre to direct its nodal agencies such as NAFED and NCCF to procure Bengal gram at the earliest. The delay in procurement will defeat the very purpose of MSP. Farmers will lose confidence in institutional safeguards, he said.

The CM assured the Centre that Karnataka is ready to shoulder its responsibilities under the PSS framework. Karnataka is ready to cooperate with central agencies to ensure smooth procurement of Bengal gram, he said. Timely action will prevent distress sale of Bengal gram, help stabilise prices, and uphold the credibility of MSP, the CM said.

*Lakhs of Bengal gram farmers in the state are in distress. They are forced to sell their rabi produce for prices lower than the MSP of Rs 5,875 per quintal announced by the Centre*

Siddaramaiah, Chief Minister

# 'Our biggest market Chickpet is today filled with cheaper Surat sarees'

A weaver works on his loom at his residence in Doddaballapur | SHASHIDHAR BYRAPPA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

"FOR plain cloth weaving, we are paid Rs 13.50 per metre, and from one loom we weave 20 metres a day. For sarees, we are paid Rs 200 for 6.5 metres. We are like coolies with our own looms," Dwarakish says, recalling that in 1988, when he was in college, he would earn Rs 100 per day, but even after 37 years, daily earnings have not increased.

"In those days, we would pay Rs 70 per day for construction labour. Today, they charge Rs 1,000 per day. We lie at the bottom."

Srinath, another weaver, says earlier, in a year they would face a couple of months with few or no orders. But now, they receive orders only for two months in a year, leaving them jobless for the remaining ten months.

"The cost of silk thread has risen to Rs 6,500 per kilo, but when we actually use it, the weight comes to only 700gm after cleaning. We are third-generation weavers and we will be the last generation to carry this legacy," he laments. He and his wife weave sarees, earning Rs 200 for a big-bordered saree and Rs 130 for a small-bordered saree per day.

BG Hemanth Raju, President of Weavers' Rights Forum, Doddaballapur, says when the Handlooms (Reservation of Articles for Production) Act, 1985, was passed, the weavers here had already moved to power loom sarees with white and golden threads, and add colours when the saree was ready. They were not allowed to weave sarees with colourful silk thread. Over a period of time, Doddaballapur sarees shifted and they started weaving artificial silk sarees.

"Chickpet market in Bengaluru, which was our biggest market once, is today filled with Surat sarees, which look like our sarees, but are cheaper. This is because there are mills in Gujarat which make Doddaballapur look-alike sarees in large numbers. If our loom sarees take six hours per saree, their machines produce six sarees in 1.5 hours. We are an unorganised sector, but theirs is organised. They also get raw material locally. Their cost per saree is just Rs 600, while ours is over Rs 1,000. The borders of mill sarees is burnt, whereas ours is interlocked," he explains.

There has been a demand from the weavers to control the flow of 'Surat sarees' and also enforce the Power Loom Reservation Act that restricts mills from copying power loom sarees.

The day is not far when the rhythmic sound of the looms would fall silent, burying a rich legacy that has been carried forward over generations.

> **The cost of silk thread has risen to Rs 6,500 per kilo, but when we actually use it, the weight comes to only 700gm after cleaning. We are third-generation weavers and we will be the last generation to carry this legacy** — Srinath, weaver

The lifeguards at Gokarna temple beach rescued a tourist from drowning in the sea. The incident occurred on Thursday when a 20-year-old was dragged deeper into the waters by the rough sea. The youth has been identified as Paraushura Rachappa, a resident of Davanagere

# 46% of GIM investment agreements fruitful: Min

## Proposals worth Rs 4.71L crores have been realised by Dec last year

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

**We are ensuring that no project remains confined to the MoU stage, but is taken to its logical conclusion**

M B Patil, Minister for Large & Medium Industries

INDUSTRIES Minister MB Patil on Thursday said that 46% of the investment agreements (MoUs) signed at the GIM have already translated into actual investments. Patil stated that out of the Rs 10.27 lakh crore commitments secured at the Global Investors' Meet (GIM) held in February 2025, investment proposals worth Rs 4.71 lakh crore have been realised by the end of December last year.

The minister provided the details ahead of his visit to the World Economic Forum, scheduled to be held in Davos from January 19 to 23. "We are ensuring that no project remains confined to the MoU stage, but is taken to its logical conclusion," Patil said.

Out of Rs 5.66 lakh crore investment commitments in the manufacturing sector, Rs 3.22 lakh crore have materialized. In the renewable energy sector, Rs 1.41 lakh crore has flowed in against commitments of Rs 4.25 lakh crore, the minister shared. Patil stated that in the manufacturing sector, Silfex has proposed an investment of Rs 9,300 crore to set up a facility for manufacturing silicon components critical to the semiconductor industry. MV Energy has proposed an investment of Rs 5,495 crore to expand solar cell and module manufacturing at the ITIR area in Bengaluru. Jindal Steel has proposed an investment of Rs 7,000 crore to establish an electrical steel manufacturing unit at Vijayanagar.

UltraTech Cement has proposed an investment of Rs 4,819 crore to set up a cement manufacturing unit in Kalaburagi district. Dalmia Cement has proposed investments of Rs 3,000 crore, along with an additional Rs 3,020 crore for expansion, at Yadawada in Belagavi district. In the renewable energy sector, Tata Power has proposed investments of Rs 8,134 crore. Volvo has proposed Rs 1,251 crore for the expansion of its Hosakote facility, while Suzlon Energy Limited has proposed investments of Rs 12,032 crore in Vijayapura district. Havells India has proposed an investment of Rs 710 crore in Tumakuru district to expand manufacturing capacity and establish a new research and development centre. Balaji Wafers (Rs 550 crore) and ASM Technologies (Rs 490 crore) have also submitted investment proposals through Karnataka Udyog Mitra, the minister stated.

TASL has proposed an investment of Rs 500 crore at Vemagal in Kolar district for manufacturing components required for the Airbus H125 model, and Safran Electronics has proposed an investment of Rs 250 crore for the manufacture of avionics and defence equipment, Patil stated.

# Activist accuses Hampi ASI of ₹1 cr scam

KIRAN BALANNANAVAR
@ Hampi, Hosapete

The coconut grove near the Gejjal Mantap in Hampi | EXPRESS

A social activist in Hampi has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), Hampi circle, of a Rs 1 crore scam. The activist said that the ASI officials sold coconut and other fruits from the protected area by not inviting a tender during the period between 2013 and 2023.

The alleged scam came to light when a local resident recently sought information on the tender floated for the sale of coconut and other fruits, and the ASI responded, saying that no data was available for the said period of 10 years. The activist said the land controlled by the ASI has around 2,000 coconut trees and a large number of several other fruit-bearing trees. However, the ASI data show that there are only 894 coconut trees, 56 mango trees, 43 sapota trees and 39 tamarind trees.

The records reveal that the tender floated last year fetched the government Rs 3.75 lakh, but no such process was followed between 2013 and 2023, leading to a loss of around Rs 1 crore to the exchequer.

The activist wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the ASI director general and the Ministry of Culture. Responding to his letter, ASI Hampi circle said a tender was floated in 2023 but none of the bidders participated in the process.

D Dhananjaya, a social activist who sought the information through an application under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, said, "After I filed the application, I was informed that no auction was conducted between 2013 and 2023. It is clear that during those 10 years, officials of ASI, Hampi circle, illegally sold the produce and misappropriated the proceeds of around Rs 1 crore."

Dhananjaya added, "After I sent a letter to Narendra Modi and other senior officials in 2023, the ASI officials said they floated a tender that year but nobody participated. The public must know what happened to the proceeds of the sale of fruits between 2013 and 2023. The current ASI data shows that there are only 894 coconut trees, but the number was nearly 2,200 a few years ago. The government had acquired 234 acres of land from farmers in and around the ASI limits in Hampi. The government must investigate the scam."

### SADHGURU VOICES FARMERS' PLIGHT, SOIL, WATER CRISIS

Bengaluru: On the occasion of Makara Sankranti, Sadhguru on Wednesday highlighted the plight of farmers, and requested everyone to dedicate two minutes daily to raise awareness about the soil and water crisis. Speaking at Sadhguru Sannidhi Bengaluru (SSB), he said, "Farming has always been backbreaking work. Today it has become heart-breaking," he said, refering to the depleting organic content. The celebration featured traditional martial arts and devotional dance. He also announced a 5-day consecration event at SSB in September, including Linga Bhairavi's Abode, Teerthkunds, and Navagraha Temple.

# Call for seperate de-addiction centres for kids

DIVYA CUTINHO @ Mangaluru

THERE is a demand for setting up separate dedicated de-addiction centres for children who are increasingly falling victims of narcotic substances and other addictions.

Renni D'souza, chairman, PADI, Mangaluru, said in the last five years, they have observed many under 18 years of age falling victim to drugs, tobacco and alcohol addictions. "Social media addiction has affected children's learning capabilities and academic performance, and increased their involvement in POCSO-related cases. To save them, we need counselling and rehabilitation centres. Children from well-to-do families can afford private facilities, but those from poor economic backgrounds cannot afford it," he said. There are no government-supported de-addiction centres or rehabilitation facilities exclusively for children who are victims of drug or any other addictions at present in Mangaluru.

# Tight security cover for Paryaya Mahotsava

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Udupi

THE district authorities have implemented extensive security measures in view of the Paryaya Mahotsava scheduled from January 17 to 18 at Udupi Sri Krishna Mutt. More than one lakh devotees are expected to take part in the biennial religious event.

The festivities began on January 9 with the ceremonial Purapravesha of Shiroor Mutt seer Sri Vedavardhana Theetha Swamy, who will ascend the Paryaya Peetha this year. The main Paryaya procession will be held early in the morning on January 18.

To ensure safety, police have installed 70 CCTV cameras, deployed one Superintendent of Police (SP), one Additional SP, eight DySPs, 21 inspectors, 61 sub-inspectors, 110 assistant sub-inspectors, 812 police personnel and 200 home guards. Quick Response Teams, six ambulances, police outposts have been set up for public help.

The Paryaya Mahotsava will conclude on January 22.

# 74% back 10-min delivery ban, except for meds

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Bengaluru

IN Bengaluru quick medicine access is seen as essential, but groceries and other products are not considered urgent enough to justify extreme timelines. Survey data shows that among consumers who want 10-minute delivery, 100% prioritised medicines, followed by essentials, reinforcing the argument that speed matters most in health-related situations. The survey findings come amid recent government discussions and mounting pressure from gig worker unions, who staged strikes in late December over pay, safety and unrealistic delivery targets.

A strong majority of quick commerce consumers, including a significant share from Bengaluru, support the Government's move to discourage 10-minute delivery promises, according to a nationwide LocalCircles survey. Overall, 74% of consumers backed the advisory issued by the Union Labour Ministry, citing concerns that extreme timelines place undue pressure on delivery partners, compromise road safety and worsen gig worker conditions.

Bengaluru emerged as a key contributor to the findings, with 16,245 responses from the city alone. Among Bengaluru respondents, 61% supported the Government's move to remove the 10-minute delivery timeline, while 31% opposed it and the rest were undecided.

The nationwide survey, conducted across 180 districts where quick commerce services are functional, received over 90,000 responses. Overall, 38% of consumers said they do not want anything delivered within 10 minutes, and among the remaining 62% who still prefer ultra-fast delivery, medicine emerged as the most critical use case, followed by daily essentials, while discretionary items ranked much lower.

**WAY FOR LIFE**
Bengaluru, Karnataka

**TENDER NOTICE**

Sealed Tenders invited from eligible Contractors for a SHORT- TERM ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECT.
Tender document (Excel): https://bit.ly/roadtender
Last date & Time: 20-01-2026, 12 PM
Authorized Signatory
WFL
www.wayforlife.org

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(A University established by the Government of Odisha)

No.: IIIT-Bh/ANRF-PAIR/023 Date : 14.01.2026

**WALK-IN INTERVIEW (OFFLINE)**

**Project Associate (PA) - ANRF-PAIR Scheme**
Walk-in Interview will be held for engagement of **Project Associates (PA)** under the **ANRF-PAIR Scheme** for the project titled ***"Consortium of Technologies for Sustainable Agriculture, Health, Energy and Environment"***.
**Date & Time :** 28.01.2026 at 11:00 AM
**Venue :** IIIT Bhubaneswar
**No. of Posts : 08** (Agriculture - 02, Environment - 01, Healthcare - 02, Renewable Energy - 03)
For further details and online submission, please visit : https://www.iiit-bh.ac.in/ Sd/- REGISTRAR
AT : Gothapatna, PO : Malipada, Bhubaneswar - 751003, Odisha, India, Web : www.iiit-bh.ac.in

**कोल इंडिया लिमिटेड**
(एक महारत्न कंपनी)

"All the tenders issued by CIL and its Subsidiaries for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of Coal India Ltd www.coalindia.in / respective Subsidiary Company, CIL e-procurement portal https://coalindiatenders.nic.in and Central Procurement Portal https://eprocure.gov.in In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal https://gem.gov.in".

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public are informed that our client intends to purchase property BBMP khata No.3453/ 1320 old BDA Site No. 1320 situated at Hosur-Sarjapur Road- Sector 2 Bangalore- 560102 in all measuring 40ft×60ft=Total 2400sqft. Bounded by :
East : Site No.1349 and 1350
West: Road
North: Site No.1319
South: Site No.1321
From its owner Smt.K.Shanta Reddy
Persons having any right over the said property may lodge their objeions/claims with documentary evidence within 7 days from the date of this publication to
L.Puttaraju, Advocate
No.103 Elegent Embassy Apartment , 4th Cross, 20th Main , 2nd Phase JPNagar, Bengaluru-560078.
Email: raviabhi886@gmail.com
Mobile:7829934588

Mysore District Co-Operative Milk Producers'Societies Union Ltd.
Bannur Road, Alanahalli Post, Mysuru-570028.
Phone No. 0821-2474475, Fax No.0821-2474476.
e - mail : jerrymys@gmail.com

**Amendment**

Read the Tender Publication, which was announced on 15.01.2026, Sl.No.1, Tender No. KMF/2025-26/IND1918, Item Details : Design, Construction, Supply and Installation of 1200cum/day capacity Effluent Treatment Plant and Integrating with the existing ETP on Turnkey Basis. the last date of the tender submission is 29.01.2026 before 5 pm. For further information please contact Purchase Department during working hours. (Mobile No: 6366430821,
Sd/- Managing Director

**केनरा बैंक** Canara Bank
(A Government of India Undertaking)

Viveknagar Branch (DP:0790)
#1, 1st Main Road, Viveknagar S.O.
Bengaluru-560047. Ph: 9483520790
E-mail: cb0790@canarabank.com

**(Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Property)**

**SALE NOTICE**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable / movable Property under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable / movable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical (Strike whichever is not applicable) **possession** of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of **Viveknagar Branch (0790)** of the **Canara Bank**, will be sold on **"As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on 06.02.2026** for recovery of **Rs.3,92,888.44 (Rupees Three Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Eight Hundred and Eighty Eight and Paisa Forty Four Only)** as on **14.01.2026** with further and charges thereon due to the **Viveknagar Branch (0790) of Canara Bank,** from **Borrower(s): (1) Bhagyamma (Borrower)** W/o Ravi No 64, 1st Cross, Anjaneya Road, Sonnenahalli, Viveknagar, Bengaluru-560047. **(2) Adinarayana Koru (Co-Borrower)** No 64, IInd Main Road, 1st Cross, Sonnenahalli, Viveknagar, Bengaluru - 560047.
The Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposits details are as under: The Earnest Money shall be deposited in **E-Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited** portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT **on or before 05.02.2026 - 4.00 PM.**

(Rs. in lakhs)

| Description of Immovable Property | Reserve Price | EMD Amount | Incremental value at Bid |
|---|---|---|---|
| **SCHEDULE A : Alur residential Block - B12/303 :** All that piece and Parcel of the property bearing No.128, in block Nos. 9, 10, 11 and 12 formed out of Survey No. 113, formed by Bengaluru Development Authority, Situated at Alur Village, along with the building standing there on, measuring North to South 60.00 meters, and East to West 44.00 Meters, thus in all measuring 2640.00 Square Meters and bounded on the: East by: Road, West by: Road, North by: Road, South by: Vecant land belonging to BDA. **SCHEDULE B:** 33.526 Square Meters of undivided share, right title and interst and ownership in the schedule 'A' Property. **SCHEDULE C:** Residential Flat No. B12/303 on the Third floor in block No.12, of Alur Layout, measuring 33.526 square meters of Built up area comprising of 1BHK constructed on the schedule 'A' property and proportionate common areas, such as Passage, Staircase, Lift Etc., and have the exclusive right to use and enjoy the same without any interruption from other co-owners of the Building and bounded on the. East by : House No.B12/302, West by : Open Space, North by : B12/304, South by : Open Space. **CERSAI Security ID : 400013619105** **Name of Title Holder : Bhagyamma W/o Ravi** | Rs. 14,79,500/- | Rs. 1,48,000/- | Rs. 10,000/- |

**Date & Time of Auction : 06.02.2026, 10.30 AM to 11:30 PM, Date of Sale Notice : 14.01.2026**
**Property Inspection Date: with prior appointment with Authorised Officer, from 16.01.2026 to 05.02.2026 between 11 A.M to 4.00 P.M**
**Place of Auction : Online, https://baanknet.com**
**Details of Auction service provider: M/s.PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd.,**
**For further details contact Authorised Officer RO East / Canara Bank, Viveknagar Branch, 1st Main Road, Viveknagar S. O, Viveknagar, Bangalore-560047. Ph: 9483520790, E-mail: cb0790@canarabank.com during office hours on any working day or the service provider E-bkray (M/s PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd), (Contact No.8291220220, Email:support.baanknet@psballiance.com)**
**Note: All charges including property tax, Electricity charges, Water Bills and Maintenance charges etc if any other charges shall be borne by the successful bidder only.**

Date : 14.01.2026
Place: Bengaluru
Sd/- Authorised Officer
Canara Bank

**The Grain Merchants' Co-Operative Bank Ltd.,**
.O, No.2, Pampamahakavi Road, Chamarajpet, Bengaluru-560018.
Phone 26677552, 26679041
Estd:1927

**POSSESSION NOTICE FOR IMMOVABLE PROPERTY**
**[ APPENDIX IV (RULE 8(1) ]**

**Where as the undersigned being the authorised officer of The Grain Merchants' Co-Operative Bank Limited under the Securitisation and Reconstructionof Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (2) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules. at The Grain Merchants' Co-Operative Bank Limited within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.**

**The borrowers in the following accounts having failed to repay the amount, notice is here by given to the borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken symbolic possession of the property described here in bellow in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 & 9 of the said rules on the dates mentioned herein below. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is/are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of The Grain Merchants' Co-Operative Bank Limited for amount and interest on & other charges.** **Date of Possession: 12.01.2026**

| Name of the Borrower/Surety & Description of the Property Mortgaged | Amount outstanding |
|---|---|
| **Applicant: Sri Harish S S/o late Shankarachar K Surety: Smt B.R.Lakshmi W/o Sri Harish S** All that piece and parcel of Residential Property being site bearing No.7, Property No.86, situated at K Channasandra Village, K.R.Puram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bengaluru now coming under the jurisdiction of Bruhath Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, measuring East to West: (49+52)/2 feet and North to South: 40 feet, total measuring 2020 Sq. Feet and bounded on East By: Site No.8, West By: Site No.2 & 3, North By: Private Property, South By: 10 Feet Passage. | **31,42,686/- + Int. thereon 12.01.2026** |
| **Applicant: Narendra Bheemappa Adnoor S/o Sri A.S.Bheemappa Surety: Sri A.S.Bheemappa S/o late Thimmappaiah** All that piece and parcel of Non-Agricultural Land measuring 9 Guntas (9800 Square Feet) in Survey No.7, Situated at Basavanapura Village, Begur Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, Bengaluru, presently comes within the limits of Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, Begur Ward No.192 and assigned as BBMP Khatha No.5/83/95/1 of Basavanapura Village and bounded on: East by : Land belonging to Smt.M.V.Nagarathna and Sri.A.S.Bheemappa, West by: Land in Survey No.7 belonging to Pleasant Valley Development Pvt.Ltd. North by: Road, South by: Land belonging to Forest Department. | **52,87,142/- + Int. thereon 12.01.2026** |

**Amount paid if any by any of the above borrowers after issuance of Possession Notice, would be reckoned for ascertaining the dues payable at the time of realisation / settlement.**

**Place: Bangalore**
**Date: 12.01.2026**
Sd/-
Authorised Officer,
The Grain Merchants' Co-Operative Bank Ltd., Bangalore -18

**SMARTADS**

**HOUSE FOR SALE**
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8th Block Plot with Old House for Sale
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35k per sqft
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**FOR SALE**
Office Building @Richmond Town
Build-Up Area: 15000 Sq.ft.
Individual Office Building For Sale. Plot area : 3700 sqft. Built-up Area: 15000 sqft. ( G + 4 Flr),

JP NAGAR
3rd Phase Premium Plot For Sale 60 X 90 - 5400 Sqft - 5400 Sqft South Facing Plot For Sale In Prime Location.

Contact - KP REALTY
7899930039 Brokers Excuse.

**MANYATHA RESIDENCY**
NAGWARA
PREMIUM BDA PLOT
50X80, 45x60
FOR SALE
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West Facing Plot Available for Sale. Behind MANYATA TECH PARK.
CONTACT KP REALTY
7899930039

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Luxury Villas also Available

Days after gold was discovered by a family in the historical village of Lakkundi in Gadag district, the state government has decided to resume excavation work in the village which was halted due to some technical reasons for the past few months. The excavation is all set to begin on 5,388 square feet on the premises of the Kote Veerabhadreshwara Temple on Friday. The earlier excavation was done in 2024 and 2025

# Did Cisco get a sweet deal? Govt backs KSWAN tender

## Supreme Court ex-judge and former Lokayukta Justice Hegde calls it 'an arbitrary decision to help a particular party'

**BANSY KALAPPA** @ Bengaluru

ALLEGATIONS of irregularities and potential favoritism have surfaced in the tender process for the Karnataka State Wide Area Network (KSWAN) upgrade, with industry stakeholders accusing the Centre for e-Governance (CeG) of tailoring specifications to favour a single Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM).

The controversy centres on tender reference CEG/2025-26/IND0043 and its subsequent reissue. Critics claim that process has been manipulated to create a de facto single-vendor scenario, raising concerns over transparency. The KSWAN initiative, aimed at providing secure and reliable network connectivity across government offices in Karnataka, had begun preparatory work in 2022.

Initially, the CeG had drafted a Request for Proposal (RFP) to support a multi-OEM architecture and conventional routing-based design, in line with standard industry practices.

The tender was floated on July 11, 2025, and attracted bids from RailTel, Orange, and TCIL, with Cisco and Juniper as participating OEMs. The stakeholders say that despite receiving three bids, authorities opened only the pre-qualification documents and cancelled the tender, citing 'improper' submissions.

CeG then formed a technical committee, claiming the earlier specifications were 'outdated.' Industry sources allege that only Cisco was consulted during the revision process, resulting in updated requirements that aligned closely with Cisco's proprietary architecture. The re-tender was issued on December 8, 2025.

At the pre-bid meeting held on December 15, 2025, Juniper and other interested parties argued that the revised specifications were proprietary and anti-competitive. They demanded neutralization of clauses to ensure a level playing field.

The matter was escalated to senior officials, including the CEO of CeG, Secretary, Chief Secretary, and the Chief Minister's office.

A corrigendum was released on January 6, 2026, introducing only superficial modifications, while the core requirements allegedly favoring Cisco remained unchanged, claimed the stakeholders. Cisco now has emerged as the sole qualified OEM. There are allegations that Cisco declined to issue Manufacturer Authorisation Forms (MAF) or provide necessary support to other potential system integrators, effectively blocking their participation in the bidding process.

The secretary, governance, Pankaj Kumar Pandey, however, said there was no abrupt cancellation of tender.

"KSWAN 3.0 tender was issued in July 2025 and there were three bidders. But all the bids were rejected by the scrutiny committee," said Pandey. Pandey said that since the original RFP was prepared in 2022, the same had to be updated keeping in mind the ongoing requirements of the Government of Karnataka and requests from various departments to accommodate more number of government offices and hence the capacity was revised.

Pandey said while revising the RFP, there was no consultation with any of the OEMs and the revised RFP did not favour any particular OEM. He added that any OEM not providing support to system integrators is not under the purview of CeG and has to be dealt by concerned System Integrators with the OEMs. He said the tender exercise is being done with due diligence and to ensure maximum benefit to government offices in Karnataka. Despite repeated attempts TNIE could not elicit any response from Cisco officials on the issue.

Meanwhile, former Supreme Court judge and Lokayukta Justice Santosh Hegde, said, "It is an arbitrary decision to help a particular party. It is a fit case to be taken to the court of law."

# Army growing stronger with time, says Guv

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE** @ Bengaluru

GOVERNOR Thaawarchand Gehlot on Thursday said that in a rapidly changing global and technological environment with increasingly complex security challenges, the Indian Army is continuously strengthening itself through modern technology, cyber capabilities, space cooperation and advanced training.

Addressing the gathering at the 78th Army Day celebrations held at the War Memorial inside the MEG Centre in Bengaluru on Thursday, Gehlot said the Indian Army stands as a role model for the younger generation, instilling the spirit of placing national interest above personal interests. He said values such as discipline, punctuality, leadership and teamwork are essential for today's youth, and the Indian Army is an embodiment of these ideals.

**Indian Army stands as a role model for the younger generation, instilling the spirit of placing national interest above personal. Values such as discipline, punctuality, leadership and teamwork are essential for today's youth**

Thaawarchand Gehlot, Governor

On the occasion, the governor also paid tribute to the brave soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice to safeguard the nation's security, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Hailing the creative and dedicated efforts of Army officers and personnel, Gehlot said these initiatives have led to significant advancements in developing defence equipment, enhancing the strength and confidence of the armed forces. He also acknowledged the immense contribution of women in the armed forces and said they have faced even the toughest hardships with dignity, patience and indomitable courage.

Karnataka and Kerala Sub Area General Officer Commanding Major General VT Mathew and Brigadier Ajay Singh Thakur, along with several other officers and personnel of the armed forces, were present at the event.

# CISCE plans helpline during board exams

**RASHMI PATIL** @ Bengaluru

IN an effort to address students' mental health concerns during examinations, the Council for the Indian School Certificate Examinations (CISCE) has announced the launch of the CISCE-Counselling and Resilience Fellowship (CARE) programme, along with a centralised helpline for students.

The initiative is aimed at supporting students appearing for the 2026 ICSE and ISC board examinations and at building long-term mental health support systems within schools. CISCE-affiliated schools have been asked to nominate one counsellor each, with applications due by early January.

The fellowship, open to counsellors from CISCE schools in India and abroad, is expected to select over 100 counsellors and will run for about seven months starting mid-January. Counsellors will assist students dealing with academic stress, exam anxiety, personal concerns and social challenges.

Louis Lopez, principal of Greenwood High School, told TNIE that while schools welcome the move, they are awaiting official communication from the Council. "We look forward to receiving details about how the facility will function during examinations," he said.

Jahnavi Murali, a counsellor at a private ICSE school, said the helpline is a positive step. "Students approach us not only during exams but also during high-pressure events. Immediate counselling helps, but a structured system will strengthen support," she said.

Child psychiatrist Dr John Vijay Sagar from NIMHANS said parents must take early signs of anxiety seriously.

Dr John Vijay Sagar, Child Psychiatrist from National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS), said, "ICSE setting up a centralised system is a good initiative. We also come across patients who deal with exam pressure and anxiety during exams. Whenever children inform their parents about feeling anxious or having odd feelings, they must not ignore it or question them in a negative way. "If children express distress, parents should listen without judgement and seek professional help if required."

FIR FILED

# *YouTuber shoots film in Kali Tiger Reserve, posts it online*

**SUBHASH CHANDRA NS** @ Kumbarwada (Uttara Kannada)

THE forest department has filed an FIR against a 'YouTuber' for trespassing, staying without permission and making videos in a protected area of the forest, and though the department served a notice to the violator, he has remained incommunicado.

Pathegudi in Kumbarwada in Kali Tiger Reserve is a core tiger reserve with frequent movement of tigers being sighted here. However, the place being inviolate as per norms, has been totally off the tourism radar.

Even inhabitants of the many villages inside the forests are scrutinised every now and then, but a blatant violation took place last November. It is said that the YouTuber, going by the name sg_malenadu on Instagram, not just stayed in the tiger reserve but also made a film using a drone and video camera, and posted it on social media. According to an FIR available with *TNIE*, he came to Kali Tiger Reserve on November 5, 2025, travelled around and rode a bike used by late actor Puneet Rajkumar inside the reserve. He shot a film and uploaded it on social media on November 21, 2025.

"After the video was uploaded, the department scrutinised it and lodged a complaint on December 2. A notice was served to the violator, asking for an explanation. However, since there has been no response from the opposite party, a case was filed under Section 2 (15, 17, 26) 27, 28, 51 of the Wildlife Act," the FIR copy says. "He was asked to come to Kumbarwada Range Forest Office and give an explanation. However, there has been no response."

When contacted, Kumbarwada RFO Girish Chougale said the violator appeared before him and gave an explanation, and the department has asked him to get the drone and video camera so it can be thoroughly checked and videos deleted.



A screen grab from the YouTuber's social media channel | EXPRESS

Local wildlife enthusiasts are questioning the forest department's inaction. "They question all locals who are dependent on forests for a livelihood. But there are movie makers like the 'Wild Karnataka' team and YouTubers who have been exploiting the reserve without permission," Ravi Redkar, a wildlife activist from Joida told *TNIE*.

Redkar had dragged the 'Wild Karnataka' film makers to court and prevented its commercial release, stating that it was made without permission and in violation of norms. "Prima facie, the YouTuber's video appears to be the tiger reserve," he said. It has been learnt that the accused remained incommunicado till January 9.


## SIR M. VISVESVARAYA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LIMITED

Corporate Office: #109, Shankar mutt Road, Shankarpuram, Bangalore – 560 004.
www.vcb.co.in, Email: corporate@vcb.co.in PH No. 22956419 / 20

### E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE

It is notified for all concened that the following property is secured in favour of **Sir M. Visvesvaraya Co-Operative Bank Ltd.** and as secured creditor taken possession under SARFAESI Act 2002, will be sold by e-auction on **20.02.2026 "as is where is and as is what is basis"** for recovery of Bank dues. This is a notice to the borrower's, Mortgagor/s and to the guarantor/s of the below said loan about hoiding of E-Auction sale on the said date, if their outstanding dues are not repaid in full by the date of auction.

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF BORROWER/S, MORTGAGOR/S & GUARANTOR/S:**

**1. M/s. Eleggant Medical Systems.** Registered office situated at No.981, 4th Block, 2nd main, Rajajinagar, Bangalore – 560 010. **Represented by: 2.Sri. Kabir Das. R. -Proprietor S/o Sri. V. Rajamanickam,** No. 160, Sharva Kunja, 9th Cross, Mysore Bank Colony, BSK 1st Stage, Bangalore – 560 050. **3. Dr. Kanchana - Guarantor W/o Sri. Kabir Das. R.,** No. 160, Sharva Kunja, 9th Cross, Mysore Bank Colony, BSK 1st Stage, Bangalore – 560 050. **4. Sri. V. Rajamanickam – Guarantor F/o Sri. Kabir Das. R.,** No. 160, Sharva Kunja, 9th Cross, Mysore Bank Colony, BSK 1st Stage, Bangalore – 560 050. **5. Smt. Rajeshwari – Guarantor W/o Sri. V. Rajamanickam,** No. 160, Sharva Kunja, 9th Cross, Mysore Bank Colony, BSK 1st Stage, Bangalore – 560 050.

The under mentioned property will be sold by "Online e-Auction through website: **https://www.banksauction.com** on **20.02.2026** for Recovery of an amount for of **Rs. 5,40,95,665/- (Rupees Five Crore Forty Lakhs Ninety Five Thousand Six Hundred and Sixty Five Only)** due and payable amount as on **31.12.2025** with further interest, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc.,

**PROPERTY SCHEDULE: Property No.1 :** All the piece and parcel of the property bearing Khatha No.325/2, I floor having BBMP PID No.82-1-325/2 measuring East to West 52 feet and North to South 64 feet totally measuring 3328 sq.ft of super built area along with 20% (1/5th) of undivided share, right, title and interest in the land and building constructed as per the norms of the concerned planning authority earlier BMP now BBMP in the property bearing corporation No.325, situated at 12th Cross, Binnamangala 1st Stage Extension, Ward No.82, Hoysalanagar, now called Indiranagar, Bangalore-560 038, measuring East to West 67 feet and North to South 80 feet, totally measuring 5360 Sq ft and bounded on East by :12th cross Road,West by: Plot No.324,North by: Plot No.326,South by : Indiranagar Main Road.

**Property No.2 :** All the piece and parcel of the property bearing Khatha No.5/1, having BBMP PID No.39-89-5/1-3rd Cross, Nagarabhavi, BBMP Ward No.39, Chandra Layout, Bengaluru measuring East to West 30 feet and North to South 40 feet, totally measuring 1200 sq.ft with building thereon East by Site No.6, West by Site No.4, North by Site No.22, South by Road.

**Property No.3:** SCHEDULE PROPERTY – Belongs to Sri. Rajamanickam. V. All the piece and parcel of the Western Portion of the property bearing No.6, Assessment No.55/4-B bearing Old Khata No.55/4-B, 896/1, BBMP PID No.39-89-6/1 situated at 3rd Cross, Nagarbhavi, Yeshwanthpura hobli, Bangalore North Taluk, measuring East to West 15 Ft. & North to South 40 Ft. totally measuring 600 Sft. and building there on East by - Site No.7 and remaining portion of Site No.6 sold to Pandiyan West by - Site No.5, North by- Property No.21,South by - Road.

**Property No.4 Schedule Property No.G-1**, Ashraya Enclave Apartment No.60, Kaggadasapura- Property belongs to Sri. Kabir Das R : All the piece and parcel of the property bearing No.12, BBMP Khatha No.313/1, Kaggadasapura Village,(Papaiah Rreddy Layout) K R Puram Hobli, earlier Bangalore South Taluk, presently Bangalore East Taluk measuring East to West 50 feet and North to South 53 feet, totally measuring 2650 sq.ft and bounded on East by Road, West by Govt. Nala Road, North by Road, South by Property No.11

**Schedule-B property:** All the piece and parcel of the property Shop measuring East to West 10 feet and North to South 10 feet, measuring 100sq. ft of super builtup area and 48 sft of undivided share of land in Schedule A property (out of 2650 sft) and 10X8 feet for parking space in front of Shop, in all 180 sq.ft at new No.60, Kaggadasapura Main Road, Ashraya Enclave Apartment, bearing Municipal No.G-1, Bangalore, Ward No.83, PID No.83-53-60 constructed on schedule A property and bounded on East by 7th Cross Road, West by 6th Cross Road, North by Kaggadasapura Main Road, South by Private Property.

**Property No.5 : Property Belongs to Sri. Kabir Das R - Schedule A:** All the piece and parcel of the immovable property /land in the layout formed by Karnataka Housing Board at Valagerahalli, Kengeri Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk, measuring East to West 17.00 Mtrs and North to South 17.50 Mtrs in all measuring 297.50 Sq.mtrs and bounded on East by Open space, West by Road, North by Building No.113, South by Road.

**Schedule-B:** Residential Tenement bearing No.562/MIG-A1, in Second Floor of Block No.114 consisting of 10 residential tenements in the multistoried building construction on the property described in schedule 'A' hereto (including one half portion in depth of the joints between the ceiling of the tenements and floor of the tenements and floor of the above it and internal wall and external walls between such levels). Schedule of the Tenements referred to the boundary schedule of the tenement bearing No.562/114, MIG-A1, Second Floor, Block 114, containing a living , Kitchen, bath & toilet, terrace /balcony approximately measuring 32.30 Sq. Mtrs built area and joint undivided 7 in 33 interest/ownership in the common space, passages, paipes, drains, and staircases and bounded on: East by- Entrance Court yard (below) & Staircase, West by- MIG-B2-384, North by - Building No.113, South by - MIG B2-384 & Staircase.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Reserve Price** | **Property No.1 - Rs.4,50,00,000/- (Rupees Four Crore Fifty Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.2 - Rs.81,00,000/- (Rupees Eighty One Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.3 - Rs.45,00,000/- (Rupees Fourty Five Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.4 - Rs.5,00,000/- (Rupees Five Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.5 - Rs.5,04,000/- (Rupees Five Lakhs Four Thousand only)** |
| **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)** | **Property No.1 - Rs.45,00,000/- (Rupees Fourty Five Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.2 - Rs.8,10,000/- (Rupees Eight Lakhs Ten Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.3 - Rs.45,000/- (Rupees Fourty Five Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.4 - Rs.50,000/- (Rupees Fifty Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.5 - Rs.50,400/- (Rupees Fifty Thousand Four Hundred only)** |
| **Bid Increment Amount** | **Property No.1 - Rs.4,50,000/- (Rupees Four Lakhs Fifty Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.2 - Rs.81,000/- (Rupees Eighty One Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.3 - Rs.4,500/- (Rupees Four Thousand Five Hundred only)**<br>**Property No.4 - Rs.5,000/- (Rupees Five Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.5 - Rs.5,040/- (Rupees Five Thousand Fourty only)** |
| **Last date for submission of tender form along with EMD and KYC documents** | **19.02.2026 upto 5:30 pm** |
| **Date and time of opening of online offers** | **on 20.02.2026, Friday from Property 1 10.30 A. M to 11.30 A.M VMC-1**<br>**Property 2 11.30 A. M to 12.30 P.M VMC-2, Property 3 12.30 P. M to 01.30 P.M VMC-3**<br>**Property 4 01.30 P. M to 02.30 P.M VMC-4, Property 5 02.30 P. M to 03.30 P.M VMC-5**<br>**(with unlimited auto extension of 5 minutes)** |
| **Bank account in which EMD to be remitted** | **Through EFT/ NEFT/ RTGS/ Demand drafts/ Bankers cheque in favor**<br>**"Sir M Visvesvaraya Co-Operative Bank Limited, Bangalore"**<br>**Branch: VIJAYANAGAR, Branch Code: 006016100000001, IFSC Code: MVCB0000006** |

### TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF E-AUCTION SALE

1) The Immovable Property will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS, WHATEVER THERE & WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS". As such sale is without any kind of warranties & indemnities. 2) For participation in the auction the intending bidders have to deposit an amount equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price of the property being caution deposit through EFT/NEFT/RTGS for above concerned branch. The Demand Draft/ Banker's Cheque/Pay Order shall be drawn after the date of publication of this Auction Sale Notice. 3) The property 'SHALL NOT be sold below the reserve price 4) The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price, including EMD amount already deposited, immediately on acceptance of bid price by the Authorized Officerl.e. before closure of business hours on the same day or not later than next working day and the balance 75% of the sale price on or before 15th day from confirmation of sale. Default in deposit of any of the above mentioned amount(s) within the period stipulated herein by the successful bidder would entail forfeiture of the entire money already deposited and Properties shall be put to auction again and the defaulting bidder shall have no claim/right in respect of Properties/ amount deposited. 5) The successful bidder shall bear all the necessary expenses like applicable stamp duties/additional stamp duty/transfer charges, **E-khatha charge, Property Tax,** Registration expenses, fees etc. for transfer of the property in its/his/her name. 6) The Authorized Officer/Bank is not bound to accept the highest offer and has the absolute right to accept or reject any or all offer(s) or adjourn/postpone/cancel the e-Auction or withdraw any property or portion thereof from the auction proceedings at any stage without assigning any reason there for. 7) The property can be inspected by the intending bidder **Date: 19.02.2026 from 10.00 AM to 5.30 PM** at his expenses at the address mentioned in the schedule. 8) The sale shall be subject to provisions of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. 9) The intending bidders shall satisfy himself about the title, ownership, statutory approvals, encumbrances etc., of the property. 10) Please refer to the link **https://www.bankeauctions.com** and **website: www.vob.co.in** for detailed terms and conditions of the sale. 11) All disputes, differences and controversies between the parties are subject to Bangalore Jurisdiction only, **STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SARFAESI ACT 2002:** This may also be treated as notice u/r 8(6) Rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to borrowers /mortgagors and Guarantors of the above said loan about the holding of E-Auction Sale on the above mentioned date. The borrower/guarantors/mortgagors are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above along with upto dated interest and ancillary expenses before the date of Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest and cost.

**Note: The intending bidder/purchaser may visit to bank's website www.vcb.co.in for detail terms and conditions regarding auction proceeding**

Date: 14.01.2026
Place: Bangalore

Sd/-Authorised Officer
Sir M. Visvesvaraya Co-operative Bank Ltd.



**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public at large are hereby informed by Smt. Sharadamma, W/o Ramappa Reddy that the Schedule Property was the subject matter in O.S.No. 795/2009 filed for Partition and Separate Possession, which came to be Decreed vide Judgement dated 22/03/2014. Whereas, Mr.Rama swamy Reddy, one of the parties to the said Suit preferred Appeal in R.F.A.No.913/2014, which is pending before Hon'ble High Court of Karnataka.

Public at large are hereby informed not to deal with the Schedule Property in any manner.

The Schedule Property is claimed to have been mortgaged in favour of Indian Overseas Bank, Koramangala Branch by an unauthorized person. Hence, people are hereby warned not deal with the Schedule Property in any manner.

**SCHEDULE PROPERTY**

All that piece and parcel of the residential property bearing Site No.21, BBMP PID No.67-11-21, Old Ward No.67, New Ward No.151 of Koramangala Village, Koramangala – 560095, Bangalore measuring East to West 60 Feet and North to South 55 Feet, totally measuring 3300 Sq.Ft, consisting of a Non-residential building measuring GF-2400 Sq.Ft, in the name of Site No.1328/1913, E-PID No.1677099035, in HAL 3rd Stage, Ward No.88, Jeevan Bheema Nagar Extension, measuring East to West 12.19 Mtrs., North to South 9.14 Mtrs., total measuring 111.48 Sq.Mtrstotally measuring 1200Sq.Ft, bounded on: East by : Property of Sri.Krishna Munireddy and Gurumurthy Reddy, West by: Road, North by :Property of Mr. Ramaswamy Reddy, South by: Property of Sri.Jayaramareddy.

**Manoj K.,** Advocate
No.33, 2nd Floor, Crescent Road, Kumara Part East, Sheshadri Puram, Bangalore - 560001
Email:somathwalawchambers@gmail.com
Ph: 8904529930



**IN THE HON'BLE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II**

BSNL Building, Telephone House 4th Floor, Rajbhavan Road, Bangalore, At Bengaluru, Karnataka –560 001.

**O. A. No.87 /2025**

**Between: State Bank of India,** SBI SME Electronic City Branch (63971), Bangalore - 560 100. **...Applicant**

**V/s**

**1. M/s. Yashas Trading,** A Proprietorship Unit, rep by its Propritrix, viz, Mrs. Renuka Ashok Rathod

**2. Mrs. Renuka Ashok Rathod**

**3. Mr .Ashok Rathod ....Defendant/s**

**SUMMONS ISSUED TO DEFENDANT No.1 TO 2, UNDER RULE 23(VIII) OF THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL (PROCEDURE) RULES, 1993 (RE-NAMED AS RECOVERY OF DEBTS AND BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993) BY PAPER PUBLICATION**

**To,**

**M/s. Yashas Trading,** A Proprietorship Unit, rep by its Proprietrix, viz **Mrs. Renuka Ashok Rathod**

3. Having Offices at :

i) Office at : No. 132 Near Hero Honda Showroom (behind Showroom) Anekal Road, Attibele, Bangalore South, Bangalore - 562 107.

PAN Card: DKLPR4047G, Email ID : yashastrading784@gmail.com Ph No. 7892075205

ii)Office at : No. 89/5, Ground Floor, Kempegowda Road, Near Muneshwara Temple, Near Indian Petrol Bunk, Jigani Industrial Area, Phase-II, Bangalore - 560 105.

**2. Mrs. Renuka Ashok Rathod** W/o. Mr. Ashok Rathod, Proprietrix of Yashas Trading, Residing at: Shivalal, No. 956, N-MIG-B, 2nd Floor, Block No. 222, 5th Phase, Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore North - 562 107. PAN Card: DKLPR4047G, Email ID : yasha strading 784@gmail.com Ph No. 7892075205, 7338506081

**4. Mr. Ashok Rathod** S/o. Shivalal Guarantor for borrower Unit M/s. Yashas Trading, Residing at : Shivalal, No. 956, N-MIG-B, 2nd Floor, Block No. 222, 5th Phase, Yelahanka New Town, Bangalore North - 562 107. PAN Card: DKLPR4047G, Email ID : yashastrading784@gmail.com Ph No. 7892075205, 7338506081

**Whereas**, the Applicant has instituted an Application U/s 19 of the Recovery of debts due to the Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993, against the Defendant for recovery of a sum of **Rs.95,25,168.00** (Rupees Ninety Five Lakhs Twenty Five Thousand One Hundred and Sixty Eight Only) amouont together with current and future interest and other relies.

Take notice that you are hereby required to show cause within 30 days of service of summons through Paper Publication on **27.02.2026** at **at 10.30 a.m.** in the person or by a Pleader/Advocate duly instructed as to why the relief's prayed for should not be granted. Take notice that, in case of default the Application will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this the **03.01.2026**

By Order of the Tribunal
Sd/- Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal - 2, Bengaluru

A 40-year-old man from Odisha impersonated a doctor and a bank official on a matrimony website to dupe a woman and her family of Rs 22.70 lakh on the pretext of marriage, police said on Thursday. The accused was arrested after a case was registered at Pahal police station near Bhubaneswar

# 'Jana Nayagan' censor row: Apex court sends back case to Madras HC

SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY
@ New Delhi

IN a major setback to the makers of the Tamil film, 'Jana Nayagan' produced by KVN Production, the Supreme Court on Thursday in its order dismissed its plea for a censor certificate and it asked them to go back to the Madras High Court division bench for relief on January 20.

While rejecting the plea, a two-judge bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Augustine George Masih questioned the pace at which the case was dealt with in by the Madras HC. "What a blistering pace? Please wait for High Court's final order. When the matter is fixed before the division bench, you don't challenge that order. Please go back to the division bench," the apex court said.

KVN Productions LLP had challenged an interim order of the Madras High Court that stayed a single-judge direction to grant censor board clearance to the Tamil movie, which was slated for a Pongal release on January 9 and is billed to be Vijay's last before his full-fledged entry into politics.

During the hearing on Thursday, Justice Datta noted that the matter is already posted for hearing by the Madras HC division bench on January 20. Senior advocate and former Attorney General (AG) of India Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the producers, said a film is a perishable item, and it would cause "serious injury" if adjudication of the dispute is delayed. "It is a long-settled industry practice to announce the release date before Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) clearance, and over 5,000 theatres were booked for the screening of the movie. The entire exercise of the CBFC was mala fide," he submitted to the apex court.

The senior lawyer further said the communication, which was received from the CBFC on January 5, stated that they had referred the film to the review committee. Jana Nayagan, was earlier slated for a Pongal release on January 9, but could not be released due to the two-judge bench stay of the HC order on it.

A bull charges out of the 'vadivasal' as youngsters attempt to tame it during a jallikattu event at Avaniyapuram in Madurai on Thursday | KK SUNDAR

## *Jallikattu begins with over 1k bulls*

Madurai: The high-octane Avaniyapuram Jallikattu being kicked off in Madurai on Thursday, marking the start of the prestigious three-day bull-taming series. Over 1,000 bulls and 550 registered tamers are currently participating in the event, which is being held under strict Supreme Court guidelines. The number of those injured at the event rose to 57 from 32 persons earlier in the day. **PTI**

## Sudden ear block can cause permanent loss of hearing: Docs

GAYATHRI M KURUP @ Bengaluru

ENT specialists have raised concerns over cases of sudden hearing loss in one ear, often without pain or warning, which many people dismiss as a minor issue. Doctors cautioned that delaying medical attention can be dangerous and may result in permanent hearing loss, stressing that such symptoms require immediate evaluation and treatment.

Many experts said that Sudden Sensorineural Hearing Loss (SSNHL) is more common than people realise, and delayed reporting often makes the damage irreversible. This lack of awareness is the biggest challenge in preventing permanent hearing disability.

"Ear block due to a cold develops gradually over two to three days and usually resolves within a week. In sudden sensorineural hearing loss, patients often say they were fine the previous night and wake up unable to hear from one ear," shared Dr Sharath G, TriLife Hospital. He warned that if treatment is delayed beyond 48 hours, there is more than a 70% chance that the hearing loss may become permanent.

SSNHL occurs due to a sudden loss of blood supply to the hearing nerve and has no warning signs. While people with diabetes and hypertension are at higher risk, doctors warn it can affect anyone, making immediate ENT consultation essential. Dr Jyotirmay S Hegde, HOD and Lead Consultant, ENT at Aster Whitefield Hospital, pointed out that the condition is frequently missed at the primary healthcare level.

**EXPRESS READ**

### Tension in Odisha over beef rumour; 12 injured

Rourkela: Prohibitory orders were clamped in the Regent Market area of Sundargarh town of Odisha on Thursday after communal tension led to intense stone pelting over rumours of beef being stored in a house. The district administration has imposed prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the BNSS in the area. A pickup van and a couple of chicken shops were set on fire, while at least half a dozen four-wheelers were damaged. Several persons, including a policeman, also suffered injuries as two groups resorted to stone pelting. Sources said after the rumour of beef being stored in a house near Regent Market spread, a mob gathered in the area. However, stone pelting started all of a sudden at around 2.30 pm and continued for about two and a half hours. **ENS**

### 'BJP possesses poor knowledge of Tamil culture'

Chennai: Senior DMK leader TKS Elangovan on Thursday took a sharp dig at Union Home Minister Amit Shah for wishing the people Thiruvalluvar Day instead of Pongal, suggesting the BJP leadership possesses a "very poor" understanding of Tamil culture. Thiruvalluvar Day is annually celebrated on the second day of Tamil Month Thai, which coincides with the 'Mattu Pongal', the second day of the harvest festival, Pongal. He emphasised that Pongal is a secular harvest festival dedicated to farmers and agriculturalists. "I don't know, Shah might have thought Thiruvalluvar is also a farmer." **PTI**

# DMK-Cong alliance hurtling towards collapse: EPS

AGENCIES @ Salem

AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Thursday said that "DMK-led alliance is heading towards a collapse" with the Congress is "all set to slip away" from the ruling coalition ahead of the 2026 Assembly elections.

Addressing a Thai Pongal outreach event in his home district of Salem, the Leader of the Opposition claimed that there was a growing friction between the two long-term allies over power-sharing and seat-negotiations and he termed this as a sign of the "DMK's weakening hold on the state". "The Congress is going to slip away from the DMK. Daily reports indicate that the question mark over their future is growing. While Stalin's alliance is crumbling due to internal contradictions, the AIADMK has formed a robust and winning front that will restore 'Amma's rule' in Tamil Nadu," Palaniswami said.

AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami performs rituals during Pongal festival celebrations at Salem in Tamil Nadu on Thursday | PTI

The former chief minister's remarks come amid reports of the Congress demanding a share in power which was reportedly rejected by DMK. Palaniswami also said "Congress is looking for an exit as the inefficient DMK government faces mounting public anger".

Lashing out at the Stalin-led administration, the AIADMK leader characterised it as a "puppet government" that has failed to maintain law and order or protect the interests of farmers. "Today, Tamil Nadu has become a land of protests. From doctors and teachers to farmers and sanitation workers, every section of society is on the streets. This government's time is up," he asserted.

The AIADMK chief also targeted the state's administrative paralysis, highlighting the absence of a permanent Director General of Police (DGP) for law and order. "A government that cannot even appoint a permanent DGP cannot be expected to protect its citizens from the drug menace that is ravaging our youth from villages to cities," he added.

**Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited**
(Wholly owned Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
(CIN - UO4010KA2002SGC030438)

**SHORT TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION**
**(Through KPP Platform)**

BESCOM Limited invites Tenders vide Enquiry No: BESCOM/2025-26/IND0158/Call-2 for the Supply of 11KV 5KN Polymeric Pin Insulators. Bid Documents available from: 16.01.2026. Last date for submission of Bids: 27.01.2026, 17:00 Hrs. Opening of Bid Document: 28.01.2026, 17:15 Hrs. The Tenders can be obtained through KPP portal website **http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in**. Aspiring bidders need to register on KPP Portal. Further bidders can take the assistance with KPPP help desk contact numbers 91-8046010000, +91-8068948777 or email at support@eprochelpdesk.com.

**Sd/- Chief General Manager, (Ele.,), Procurement, BESCOM.**

For electricity related complaints call 1912
Download BESCOM Mithra MOBILE APP

**WESTERN RAILWAY**
MATERIAL MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT
VARIOUS MATERIALS SUPPLY
E-PROCUREMENT TENDER NOTICE No. S/03/2026 Date 12.01.2026

| S.N. | SHORT DESCRIPTION OF ITEM | QUANTITY | T.O.D. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 21 | Welding Simulator with all standard concomitant accessories | 12 Nos | 16-Mar-26 |
| 22 | 16" brake unit for regenerative brake | 125 Nos | 02-Mar-26 |
| 23 | Traction Motor Complete with pinion | 4 Nos | 23-Feb-26 |
| 24 | LED Signal Lighting Unit - Shunt | 4711 Nos | 17-Feb-26 |
| 25 | LED Signal Lighting Unit For Route Indicator | 5521 Nos | 13-Feb-26 |
| 26 | Main Led Signal Lighting - Aspect Yellow | 4912 Nos | 11-Feb-26 |
| 27 | Main Led Signal Lighting-aspect Red | 3162 Nos | 09-Feb-26 |
| 28 | Main Led Signal Lighting-aspect Green | 2265 Nos | 09-Feb-26 |
| 29 | Lead acid batteries, 75 AH | 64 Set | 06-Feb-26 |
| 30 | Running Contract of One year for Supply of Elastic Rail Clips (ERC) Mark-V confirming to RDSO drawing No.T-5919 | 4972365 Nos | 05-Feb-26 |

**CORRIGENDUM**
Please read the due date as "26.01.2026" for the tender notice no S-67-2025 dated: 13.11.2025 at Sr. No. 629
Regarding detailed notice EMD, Purchase restrictions and detailed tender conditions, please visit website **www.ireps.gov.in** and **wr.indianrailways.gov.in**
1003
Like us on: facebook.com/WesternRly • Follow us on: X.com/WesternRly

**SIR M. VISVESVARAYA CO-OPERATIVE BANK LIMITED**
Corporate Office: #109, Shankar mutt Road, Shankarpuram, Bangalore – 560 004.
www.vcb.co.in, Email: corporate@vcb.co.in PH No. 22956419 / 20

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**

It is notified for all concened that the following property is secured in favour of **Sir M. Visvesvaraya Co-Operative Bank Ltd.** and as secured creditor taken possession under SARFAESI Act 2002, will be sold by e-auction on **03.02.2026 "as is where is and as is what is basis"** for recovery of Bank dues. This is a notice to the borrower's, Mortgagor/s and to the guarantor/s of the below said loan about hoiding of E-Auction sale on the said date, if their outstanding dues are not repaid in full by the date of auction.

**NAME AND ADDRESS OF BORROWER/S, MORTGAGOR/S & GUARANTOR/S:**

**1. M/s. Vittals Medicare Pvt. Ltd.,** situated at No.270, 1st Floor, Domlur 2nd Stage, Indiranagar, Bangalore – 560 071.
**2. Sri. Kabir Das. R. S/o Sri Rajamanickam,** No. 160, "Sharva Kunja", 9th Cross, Mysore Bank Colony, BSK 1st Stage, Bangalore–560 050.
**3. Dr. Kanchana W/o Sri Kabir Das R.,** No. 160, Sharva Kunja, 9th Cross, Mysore Bank Colony, BSK 1st Stage, Bangalore – 560 050.

The under mentioned property will be sold by "Online e-Auction through website: **https://www.banksauction.com** on **03.02.2026** for Recovery of an amount for of **Rs.8,99,73,787/- (Rupees Eight Crores Ninty Nine Lakhs Seventy Three Thousand Seven Hundred and Eighty Seven Only)** due and payable amount as on **31.12.2025** with further interest, incidental expenses, costs, charges etc.,

**PROPERTY SCHEDULE: Property No.1 (SMVCB-VJN-VMC-1):** All the piece and parcel of the property bearing Khatha No.325/3, II floor having BBMP PID No.82-1-325/3 measuring East to West 52 feet and North to South 64 feet totally measuring 3328 sq.ft of super built area along with 20% (1/5th) of undivided share, right, title and interest in the land and building constructed as per the norms of the concerned planning authority earlier BMP now BBMP in the property bearing corporation No.325, situated at 12th Cross, Binnamangala 1st Stage Extension, Ward No.82, Hoysalanagar, now called Indiranagar, Bangalore-560 038, measuring East to West 67 feet and North to South 80 feet, totally measuring 5360 Sq ft and bounded on East by :12th cross Road,West by: Plot No.324,North by: Plot No.326,South by : Indiranagar Main Road.

**Property No.2 (SMVCB-VJN-VMC-2) :** All the piece and parcel of the property bearing Khatha No.325/4, III floor having BBMP PID No.82-1-325/4 measuring East to West 52 feet and North to South 64 feet, totally measuring 3328 sq.ft of super built area along with 20% (1/5th) of undivided share, right, title interest in the land and building constructed as per the norms of the concerned planning authority earlier BMP now BBMP in the property bearing corporation No.325, situated at 12th Cross, Binnamangala 1st Stage Extension, Ward No.82, Hoysalanagar, now called Indiranagar,Bangalore-560038, measuring East to West 67 feet and North to South 80 feet, totally measuring 5360 Sq ft and bounded on East by : 12th cross Road,West by : Plot No.324,North by : Plot No.326, South by : Indiranagar Main Road.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Reserve Price** | **Property No.1 - Rs.4,50,00,000/- (Rupees Four Crore Fifty Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.2 - Rs.4,00,00,000/- (Rupees Four Crore only)** |
| **Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)** | **Property No.1 - Rs.45,00,000/- (Rupees Fourty Five Lakhs only)**<br>**Property No.2 - Rs.40,00,000/- (Rupees Fourty Lakhs only)** |
| **Bid Increment Amount** | **Property No.1 - Rs.4,50,000/- (Rupees Four Lakhs Fifty Thousand only)**<br>**Property No.2 - Rs.4,00,000/- (Rupees Four Lakhs only)** |
| **Last date for submission of tender form along with EMD and KYC documents** | **02.02.2026 upto 4:30 pm** |
| **Date and time of opening of online offers** | **03.02.2026, Tuesday from 10.30 AM to 11.30 AM for VMC-1 and 11.30 AM to 12.30 PM for VMC-2 (with unlimited auto extension of 5 minutes)** |
| **Bank account in which EMD to be remitted** | **Through EFT/ NEFT/ RTGS/ Demand drafts/ Bankers cheque in favor "Sir M Visvesvaraya Co-Operative Bank Limited, Bangalore" Branch: VIJAYANAGAR, Branch Code: 006016100000001, IFSC Code: MVCB0000006** |

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF E-AUCTION SALE**

1) The Immovable Property will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS, WHATEVER THERE & WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS". As such sale is without any kind of warranties & indemnities. 2) For participation in the auction the intending bidders have to deposit an amount equivalent to 10% of the Reserve Price of the property being caution deposit through EFT/NEFT/RTGS for above concerned branch. The Demand Draft/Banker's Cheque/Pay Order shall be drawn after the date of publication of this Auction Sale Notice. 3) The property 'SHALL NOT be sold below the reserve price 4) The successful bidder shall have to deposit 25% of the sale price, including EMD amount already deposited, immediately on acceptance of bid price by the Authorized Officerl.e. before closure of business hours on the same day or not later than next working day and the balance 75% of the sale price on or before 15th day from confirmation of sale. Default in deposit of any of the above mentioned amount(s) within the period stipulated herein by the successful bidder would entail forfeiture of the entire money already deposited and Properties shall be put to auction again and the defaulting bidder shall have no claim/right in respect of Properties/ amount deposited. 5) The successful bidder shall bear all the necessary expenses like applicable stamp duties/additional stamp duty/transfer charges, **E-khatha charge, Property Tax,** Registration expenses, fees etc. for transfer of the property in its/his/her name. 6) The Authorized Officer/Bank is not bound to accept the highest offer and has the absolute right to accept or reject any or all offer(s) or adjourn/postpone/cancel the e-Auction or withdraw any property or portion thereof from the auction proceedings at any stage without assigning any reason there for. 7) The property can be inspected by the intending bidder **Date: 02.02.2026 from 10.00 AM to 4.30 PM** at his expenses at the address mentioned in the schedule. 8) The sale shall be subject to provisions of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. 9) The intending bidders shall satisfy himself about the title, ownership, statutory approvals, encumbrances etc., of the property. 10) Please refer to the link **https://www.bankeauctions.com** and **website: www.vob.co.in** for detailed terms and conditions of the sale. 11) All disputes, differences and controversies between the parties are subject to Bangalore Jurisdiction only, **STATUTORY 15 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) OF THE SARFAESI ACT 2002:** This may also be treated as notice u/r 8(6) Rule 9(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to borrowers /mortgagors and Guarantors of the above said loan about the holding of E-Auction Sale on the above mentioned date. The borrower/guarantors/ mortgagors are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above along with upto dated interest and ancillary expenses before the date of Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/sold and balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest and cost.

**Note: The intending bidder/purchaser may visit to bank's website www.vcb.co.in for detail terms and conditions regarding auction proceeding**

Date: 14.01.2026
Place: Bangalore

Sd/-Authorised Officer
Sir M. Visvesvaraya Co-operative Bank Ltd.

**IN THE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL -2**
4th Floor, BSNL Building
Rajbhavan Road, Bengaluru -560 001

**O.A. No. 1234 /2021**

**In the Matter of : State Bank of India, RACPC - Koramangala Branch, Bengaluru ...Applicant**
**And**
**Ms. Swachchatoya Banerjee** D/o. Sri Syamal Ranjan Banerjee & Another **...Defendants**

**SUMMONS TO THE DEFENDANTS UNDER RULE 23(VIII) OF RBD Act, 1993 (as amended)**

**To:**
**2.M/s. Hi-Life Ventures Private Limited** No. 137/1 &2, Balagere- Gunjur Road, Varthur Hobli, Bengaluru - 560 087.
Also at : 303, Balagere Rd, Devasthan agalu, Balagere, Bangalore - 560 087, (as Developer and GPA Holder of Owners), Represented by Director: CIN: U45200KA2013PTC072778 e-MAIL: sales@hilifeventures.com
**3. Mrs. T. Rajakumari,** Aged about 47 years W/o. T. Narasimhulu, No. 1237, 24th Cross, Parangipalya, Sector-2, HSR Layout, Bengaluru - 560 102. PAN: ACGPT6590A,
**4. M/s. Reliance Home Finance Limited Regd. & Corp. Office:** The Rugy 11th Floor, North West Wing, Plot No. 29, Senapathi Bapat Marg, Dadar West, Mumbai -400028, CIN:U67190MH2008PLC183216
**....Defendants No.2,3 and 4**

WHEREAS, the Applicant has instituted an Application under Section 19 of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 (as amended), against the Defendants for a sum of **Rs.25,00,125/-** as mentioned in the Original Application together with current and future interest and for other relief's.

You are hereby required to show within 30 days of publication of summons/notice or on **26.02.2026 at 10.30 a.m.** in person or by a Pleader/Advocate duly instructed as to why the relief prayed for should not be granted.

Take notice that in case of default, the Application will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this 28.11.2025.

By Order of the Tribunal
Sd/- Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal-2 ,
Bangalore- 560 001.

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank
(A Government of India Undertaking)

**Viveknagar Branch (DP:0790),**
**#1, 1st Main Road, Viveknagar, Bengaluru-560047.**
**E-mail:cb0790@canarabank.com**

**(Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Property)**

**SALE NOTICE**

**E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Properties under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with provision to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.**

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the contructive/physical (Strike whichever is not applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of **Canara Bank, Viveknagar Branch [0790]** will be sold on **"As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on 06.02.2026,** for recovery of **Rs.4,86,833.91 (Rupees Four Lakh Eighty Six Thousand Eight Hundred and Thirty Three and Paisa Ninety One Only)** as on **14.01.2026** with further interest and other charges thereon due to the **Viveknagar Branch [0790]** of Canara Bank from **Borrower/s (1) Bhapanamma P (Borrower)** W/o Kondaiah, No. 11/1, 2nd Main Road, Sonnenahalli, Viveknagar, Bengaluru-560047. **(2) Kondaiah P.M. (Co-borrower),** No.11/1, 2nd Main Road, Sonnenahalli, Viveknagar, Bengaluru-560047. **(3) Kondal Rao L. (referred as Guarantor).** S/o Subbarayudu, No.64, 1st Cross, Anjenaya Road, Sonnenahalli, Viveknagar, Bengaluru-560047.

The Reserve Price and Earnest Money Deposits details are as under: The Earnest Money shall be deposited in E-Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT on or before **05.02.2026 by 4.00 PM.** **(Rs. in lakhs)**

| Description of Immovable | Reserve Price | EMD Amount | Incremental value at Bid |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Name of Title Holder : Bhapanamma P W/o Kondaiah.**<br>**SCHEDULE A: Alur Residential Block - B16/204** All that piece and Parcel of the property bearing No. 128, in block No.13,14,15 & 16 formed out of Survey No. 113, formed by Bengaluru Development Authority, Situated at Alur Village, along with the building standing there on, measuring North to South 44.00 meters and East to West 60.00 meters, thus in all measuring 2640.00 Square Meters and bounded on the: East by: Property belonging to BDA, West by: Passage, North by: Road, South by: Road.<br>**SCHEDULE B:** 33.526 Square Meters of undivided share, right title and interest and ownership in the schedule **'A'** Property.<br>**SCHEDULE C:** Residential Flat No. B16/204 on the second floor in block No.16, of Alur Layout, measuring 33.526 square meters of Built up area comprising of 1BHK constructed on the schedule 'A' property and proportionate common areas, such as Passage, Staircase, Lift etc., and have the exclusive right to use and enjoy the same without any interruption from other co-owners of the building and bounded on the East by: House No. B16/203, West by: House No. B16/205, North by: House No. B16/201, South by: Passage.<br>**CERSAI Security ID: 400013632554** | **Rs. 14,79,500/-** | **Rs. 1,48,000/-** | **Rs. 10,000/-** |

**Date & Time of Auction : 06.02.2026, 10.30 AM to 11.30 PM, Date of Sale Notice : 14.01.2026.**

**Property Inspection Date : with prior appointment with Authorised Officer, from 16.01.2026 to 05.02.2026 between 11.00 A.M to 4.00P.M**

**Place of Auction : Online, https://baanknet.com**

**Known encumbrances, if any: There are no encumbrances to the knowledge of the Bank.**

**Details of Auction service provider: M/s.PSB Alliance Pvt Ltd**

**For further details contact Authorised Officer RO East / Canara Bank, Viveknagar Branch, 1, 1st Main Road, Viveknagar S. O, Viveknagar, Bangalore 560047 Ph: 9483520790 e-mail: cb0790@canarabank.com during office hours on any working day or the service provider E-bkray (M/s PSB Alliance Pvt. Ltd), (Contact No.8291220220, Email:support.baanknet@psballiance.com)**

**Note: All charges including property tax, Electricity charges, Water Bills and Maintenance charges etc if any other charges shall be borne by the successful bidder only.**

Date : 14.01.2026
Place: Bengaluru

Sd/- Authorised Officer
Canara Bank

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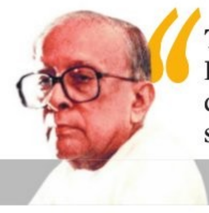
# EDITORIAL



"The Indian Constitution is a federal instrument. However, right from its inception, the Indian ruling classes have been engaged in ensuring that a unitary structure is allowed to overwhelm the political scenario" — Jyoti Basu

INDIAN EXPRESS IS NOT AN INDUSTRY. IT IS A MISSION.

— Ramnath Goenka

## ADDRESS POST-GRAD MED SEAT VACANCIES WITHOUT IMPAIRING EXAM INTEGRITY

A troubling pattern over the last few years has been the sacrifice of merit in the name of providing students access to postgraduate medical courses. The final round of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) PG counselling is when the floodgates open, as they did again this year. The cut-off score for the general and economically weaker sections dropped to the 7th percentile from the 50th; for persons with disabilities in the general category, to the 5th from the 45th; and for other backward classes and the Scheduled Castes and Tribes to zero from the 40th.

A zero percentile translates to a score of -40 out of 800 in the qualifying exam, since it carries negative marking. If the zero percentile for the reserved categories drew eyeballs this time, the bigger jaw-dropper came in 2023, when candidates across categories who had effectively flunked the exam—scoring -40—were rendered eligible for PG courses.

Such absurdities occur when a large number of seats remain vacant despite multiple rounds of counselling; the vacancy this time was around 18,000. Most of these seats are in private colleges, often located in remote areas with inadequate facilities and faculty. They also charge exorbitant fees and pressure the government, through bodies such as the Indian Medical Association, to lower the qualifying score to fill seats. Dr Rohan Krishnan, chief patron and co-founder of the Federation of All India Medical Association, which is leading the current pushback, flags the admission of candidates with negative marks as a threat to patient safety and public health, particularly affecting vulnerable sections. He attributes this to the mindless mushrooming of PG seats—from 31,185 in 2014 to 82,059 now—and the compromising of exam integrity to fill them.

On the flip side is the argument that filling vacant seats with qualified MBBS doctors helps increase the number of resident doctors, addressing staff shortages and enhancing patient care. It also gives late bloomers another chance to upgrade their skills. Clinical seats tend to fill quickly; it is the pre- and para-clinical seats that remain vacant after the second round. Integrating this category with the clinical workforce could be a way forward. Medicine is a people-facing profession built on trust. PG anomalies must not be allowed to weaken that bond.

## SABARIMALA PROBE: SPARE POLITICS, ENSURE FAIRNESS

THE ongoing investigation into the Sabarimala gold theft case has expanded with the arrest of a thantri (hereditary head priest) of the temple. The police's special investigation team probing the case under the Kerala High Court's supervision has claimed that the thantri, Kandararu Rajeevaru, played a role in the conspiracy. This marks a significant turning point in the investigation, which had so far been focused on the involvement of former and serving officials of the Travancore Devaswom Board—mostly CPI(M) members or nominees. This had made the case a CPI(M) problem. The opposition successfully campaigned at the recent local body polls flagging the theft as a plot by CPI(M) and its men to loot temple assets.

In his defence, Rajeevaru has claimed that his role was limited to performing rituals, and hence, he cannot be blamed for administrative failures. Another point to note is that while the SIT was quick to arrest and jail Rajeevaru after calling him in for questioning, it dragged its feet on arresting K P Sankar Das, an LDF nominee on the temple board whose son is a senior police officer, despite the HC's repeated chastening. Meanwhile, the SIT has broadened its inquiry to include the replacement of the temple flagstaff in 2017, bringing the tenure of a Congress nominee at the helm of the temple board into the picture.

No doubt, the investigation is not just about the conspiracy and the people behind it. Its immense political impact was felt in the local body elections and will certainly have a bearing on the coming assembly elections, too. It's important, then, to ensure that the probe is not turned into a political tool. This is not to argue for or against any individual's arrest or investigating any aspect. No one guilty should be spared. The loot is a matter concerning temple artefacts that are beyond valuation and embody the faith of millions. The investigation should be above suspicion. That's why the demand for a neutral agency to take over becomes relevant, a demand backed by the Union home minister. Though the HC is monitoring the probe, bringing in a central agency should be considered. It's essential to ensure that the investigation is fair, transparent and independent of lobbies.

QUICK TAKE

### PLAYING HOST TO THE WORLD

WHEN international stars complain of unhealthy conditions at a prestigious sporting event's venues, the word goes around. Danish badminton players Mia Blichfeldt and Anders Antonsen, invited to the India Open, complained of unclean facilities and pollution in Delhi. A shuttler from South Korea, one of the 20 countries represented, posted images of a monkey in the stadium. Hygiene and safety are top priorities for athletes who train hard to be in top physical form for a tournament. Before the 2010 Commonwealth Games, experts trained a whole host of Delhiites—from stadium attendants and security personnel to cab drivers—in some finer aspects of hospitality and hygiene. A country that aspires to host many more foreign tourists, business leaders and sports stars must institutionalise such training.

Migration of doctors and nurses from poorer nations to richer ones has created a deeply disbalanced global healthcare system. There's need to create a combined response force to address future emergencies

## GROWING NEED TO HEAL THE WORLD AS ONE FAMILY

K SRINATH REDDY
Chancellor of the PHFI University of Public Health Sciences and Chair of the Centre for Universal Health Assuance at the Indian School of Public Policy

MANDAR PARDIKAR

EVERY country's health system requires an optimal number of doctors, nurses, midwives, technicians, other allied professionals and frontline health workers. Such 'health workers' provide a wide range of services in community as well as institutional settings. From birth to death, virtually every individual accesses some of these services.

As the global population grows and extends its life expectancy, there is a growing need for a larger health workforce to meet a wider range of healthcare needs. The World Health Organization estimates a global shortage of 11 million health workers by 2030. The low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) of Africa and Asia will be most affected by the shortages. Among healthcare professionals, nurses will be in greatest shortage.

Globally, this shortage has arisen from underinvestment in health workforce education and professional development. High-income countries (HICs) have, over the past 70 years, resorted to recruitment of trained health workers from LMICs to cover gaps in their health workforce. Higher salaries, better working conditions, skill enhancement, appealing socio-cultural milieu, and educational opportunities for children acted as 'pull' factors, while poorly resourced and badly governed health systems as well socio-political instability in some countries acted as 'push' factors propelling health worker migration.

To address challenge of growing global inequities in health workforce availability, the WHO framed the Global Code of Practice on the International Recruitment of Health Personnel. This voluntary code, adopted by all WHO members at the 63rd World Health Assembly in 2010, called upon 'destination countries'—mostly high-income ones—to adopt ethical practices for recruiting health workers from 'source countries'—mostly LMICs—and protect their rights while ensuring that health systems of the source countries are not drained of the workforce needed to meet their needs.

Despite this, WHO's database reveals marked inequities in the global distribution of health workforce. According to recent estimates, 23 percent of the world's doctors, nurses and midwives reside in 10 HICs that comprise 9 percent of the global population. In sharp contrast, only 5 percent of them reside in the 55 countries in the WHO Health Workforce Support and Safeguards List that are home to 21 percent of the world's population. This inequity is aggravated by continued migration of health workers from LMICs to HICs.

Members of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development and the Gulf Cooperation Council also contribute to health worker migration as premier destination countries. The share of foreign-born doctors in OECD countries rose by 86 percent in the first two decades of the century, while the share of nurses grew nearly two-and-a-half times. While migration of health workers also occurs among HICs, that does not adversely impact their health systems in the manner migration from LMICs to HICs does.

As populations in HICs age and experience falling fertility rates, their ability to draw young people from their own countries into the health workforce is diminished. They increasingly try to recruit qualified persons from LMICs. This is no longer restricted to doctors, nurses or technicians. The need for providing physical and mental support to aged persons has given rise to the 'care industry', where assistance is provided to elderly persons and people with physical or mental disabilities for performing activities of daily living. Migration of 'care workers' also needs to follow the code set for 'health workers'.

WHO constituted an international expert committee to advise it on the code revision in 2025. Its report, reviewed through extensive consultations with experts, governments, professional associations and recruiting agencies, was submitted to WHO's executive board by its director general.

While reiterating the need for better observance of ethical practices in recruitment and protection of migrant workers' rights, the revision calls for inclusion of 'care workers' in the ambit of the code. It calls for 'co-investment' by source and 'destination countries' to jointly develop health workforce numbers and competencies to meet each other's needs.

It advocates greater investment in health workforce education by all countries and the need to respond to ongoing demographic, epidemiological and technological transitions while doing so. It urges timely and accurate reporting on in-flows and outflows of health workers by all governments and recruitment agencies.

The expert group also recommended that data on internationalisation of health professional education must be gathered, to track international flows of students and trainees. It emphasises the need for increased research funding on health and care worker migration, to address critical information gaps and enable ethical and efficient management of international flows.

The revised code also draws on the experience of the Covid-19 pandemic to caution that health worker migration should not weaken the capacity of vulnerable countries to effectively respond to public health emergencies. If outmigration continues in large numbers, countries in Africa and Asia will suffer greatly whenever epidemics, natural disasters or other emergencies challenge their health systems.

It is important to ensure that each country's health workforce is fully functional in a steady state and also has a reserve capacity to create a swift, strong and sustained surge response when a public health emergency arises. Co-investment by all countries can help to ensure that common global threats can be countered competently and confidently during such surges. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, at a recent G20 meeting, proposed the creation of a global emergency medical response force that can rapidly respond to a public health emergency anywhere in the world.

India is increasing investments—both by the government and the private sector—in expanding the health workforce. It also has checks on outmigration, like emigration clearance for nurses and issuance of no-objection certificates for doctors. It aims to use its demographic advantage of a young population by training health workers to meet shortages in the global workforce through the Heal by India programme.

But even as we position ourselves to meet global needs, while planning our health workforce development strategy, we must also correct regional disparities within the country.

*(Views are personal)*
*(ksrinath.reddy@phfi.org)*

## HOW MAMATA RESET THE NARRATIVE

SHIKHA MUKERJEE
Political commentator

THE routine of raids by the Enforcement Directorate or the Central Bureau of Investigation in search of evidence of crime and money laundering is not shocking. Not even when such raids are conducted on politically consequential persons from the opposition prior to an election.

But it is indeed shocking—if not scandalous—when a sitting chief minister is accused of "gross obstruction" and theft of crucial data, files and evidence by the ED. On January 8, when Mamata Banerjee stormed into a building an ED team was raiding because it housed an office of the Indian Political Action Committee or I-PAC, a consultancy advising the Trinamool Congress, she had her reason ready: "I intervened as the TMC chairperson, not as chief minister. They came to steal my party data. I will expose everything if needed."

In response, the ED was compelled to issue a denial: "The search is evidence-based and not targeted at any political establishment. No party office has been searched. The search is not linked to any elections, and is part of regular crackdown on money laundering." The central agency went to the Calcutta High Court and then the Supreme Court, accusing Banerjee of "theft of digital devices and other evidence, and wrongful restraint and confinement of central government officers".

The court hearings as well as the West Bengal government's caveat—that "such targeted seizure amounts to an impermissible intrusion into TMC's right to privacy under Article 21 and its constitutional right to participate meaningfully in the democratic process under Article 19"—have set the stage for a litigation that's likely to proceed at the regular pace of such contests.

There are, however, two sides to the incident—the legal and the political.

The ED is essentially saying that it acted independently and that its search of the I-PAC office and its co-founder and director Pratik Jain's residence are "not linked to any elections". In other words, it is defending its action from the accusation levelled by Banerjee. To go on the defensive after an aggressive move is a sign of weakness.

Banerjee's counter-attack raises a fundamental question: are public institutions neutral or are they subject to pressures exercised by ruling regimes? The question is not limited to central institutions like the ED; it also addresses the role of the West Bengal police on the one hand and the impartiality of adjudicating institutions on the other. By broadening the context of the raid into an aggressive act violating free and fair participation in the democratic process under Article 19, the Banerjee government has questioned the role, responsibility and conduct of a number of public institutions including the Election Commission.

PTI

By questioning the impartiality of public institutions like Enforcement Directorate and Election Commission, the West Bengal chief minister has positioned herself as a champion of those who feel wronged by them. The state police's role should also be scrutinised in this saga of raid and counter-raid

The CM's latest letter to the Chief Election Commissioner on the special intensive revision (SIR) of rolls, released on January 12 along with a petition by TMC MP Derek O'Brien, challenges the commission's role as a law-abiding institution. The petition demands that the EC "stop issuing instructions for compliance by the booth level officers (BLOs) and other officers in the SIR exercise through WhatsApp or other such informal channels". It also calls on the judiciary to declare all such instructions issued so far as illegal.

Banerjee's letter points to "internal record-keeping deficiencies" and complains: "Such administrative lapses are being unfairly forced upon citizens, causing severe harassment and resulting in the denial of their constitutional rights. This defeats the very objective of the SIR, which is intended to strengthen and purify the electoral rolls, not to exclude genuine and eligible voters."

Sections of voters, sportspersons who have represented India, and functionaries attached to the EC for SIR work have protested against what they perceive is wrong with the process. The support these complaints provide to Banerjee is the political context in which she has blamed the BJP and the Union home minister, whom she has called "nasty" and "naughty", for the timing of the ED raid. She has contended that I-PAC's Kolkata office was effectively a TMC back-office where sensitive and confidential information as well as some SIR details were kept.

At the outset, by labelling the ED raid and the SIR as politically motivated, Banerjee has repositioned herself to represent victims. That list includes hapless voters required to prove their identity, protesting BLOs and electoral registration officers (EROs), as well the West Bengal Civil Service (Executive) Officers' Association, which pointed out that the "*suo motu*, system-driven deletion of electors" under SIR bypassed the legally-mandated role of EROs. In doing so, she has taken over the narrative and reset it.

Till the BJP comes back with an appropriate riposte that can counter the perception Banerjee has created of the Centre's victimisation of all things Bengali—from language, internal and cross-border migration, culture and identity to the subtleties of its social and political past—the current score in the run-up to the state assembly battle indicates she has surged ahead.

The ED raid, SIR process and the Bengali-Bangladeshi-ghuspethiya (illegal immigrant) conflation have not created the political advantages for the BJP they ought to have. Local party leaders are on the defensive. It is as though they are waiting for direction from the high command—which could come this weekend, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits West Bengal.

*(Views are personal)*

## MAILBAG

WRITE TO: letters@newindianexpress.com

### India-EU resolve

Ref: *India & Europe need rule-based ties* (Jan 15). The fruition of the long-awaited pact would be a game-changer for both the entities. The resolution of contentious issues like the carbon border adjustment mechanism, automobile tariffs and India's demand for tariff-free access to labour-intensive goods is crucial.
**Rajarao Kumar, Bengaluru**

### New geoeconomics

Gone are the days of imperial hegemony. Multipolarity is now the template of shared resources, technology and merchandise in multiple domains to fortify geoeconomics in both eastern and western terrains. It's imperative for the EU to iron out points of friction with geopolitical pragmatism and refuse to comply with Washington's diktat.
**Venkat Desikan, Chennai**

### Protecting farmers

Ref: *Probe those who cashed in* (Jan 15). While the court orders and subsequent government action offer some relief, they cannot undo decades of injustice faced by farmers and landowners. What matters now is fixing accountability. Development must not come at the cost of fairness, transparency and people's livelihoods.
**Mahi Gupta, Bengaluru**

### Killer threads

Ref: *Abandon kite arms race* (Jan 15). Festive joy should not come with fatal consequences. Deaths from barely-visible nylon manja highlight how the pastime has turned lethal. Court bans are necessary, but enforcement alone is insufficient. Treating the use of dangerous threads as parental negligence could deter misuse. It's time to return to the safe cotton manja.
**K Chidanand Kumar, Bengaluru**

### Algorithm's pressure

Ref: *Human cost of need for speed* (Jan 15). The new codes remind us of the lives of delivery workers who race to keep their platform's promises every day. Their safety and well-being are lost amid the ticking app timer. Strong laws and humane protections should not be delayed any longer.
**Hashir Arambram, Kozhikode**

### Humane tech

Technology needs to function with a humane touch. Factors like weather and accessibility hauntingly work as speed bumps to the workers—increasingly so in urban settings. A fair order preparation and delivery-window promise would also help users, who are oblivious of the workers' constraints.
**Sachidananda Satpathy, Sambalpur**

THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS
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**POSTS OF THE DAY**

**Mahua Moitra** @MahuaMoitra
Hon'ble SC says must fix accountability for community dogs. My Lords- did you hold Delhi govt accountable for AQI levels... Just asking.

**Mallikarjun Kharge** @kharge
You committed the crime of razing rare ancient heritage—Manikarnika Ghat described in the Gupta period, which Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar had renovated.

**Yogi Adityanath** @myogiadityanath
May the grace of Lord Bhaskar and the blessings of Mother Ganga-Yamuna-Saraswati always remain upon everyone.

# No negotiation on transfer of source code for IAF jets

## Access will allow integration of indigenous weapons, say sources

**MAYANK SINGH** @ New Delhi

**Whether it is Rafale or another platform, operational suitability and ease of integration are key. The MRFA programme is seen as critical to modernising the IAF, enhancing combat readiness, and strengthening self-reliance in defense** — A P Singh, Chief of Air Staff

THE transfer of source code will be a non-negotiable condition in the Indian Air Force (IAF)s' upcoming contract for 114 multi-role fighter aircraft (MRFA), sources confirmed, underlining the service's insistence on operational flexibility and long-term self-reliance.

The procurement process is underway and is expected to reach the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) soon for approval of the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN), which is the formal authorisation to initiate acquisition procedures. Sources emphasised that the new jets will be able to integrate indigenous weapons as required and maintain seamless communication with aircraft of foreign origin, ensuring full interoperability.

"The permission to integrate weapons as per force requirements will be non-negotiable," a source said. "Similarly, connectivity with other aircraft, even if from a different manufacturer, will be mandatory." Following DAC approval, the proposal will move to the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for final clearance. Only then will formal contract and cost negotiations begin. The medium-category fighters are expected to complement the IAF's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) fleet and the future Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), with budget provisions for existing programmes already secured. Sources stressed that MRFA induction will not affect other projects.

Procurement under the "Make in India" framework will allow Indian companies to partner with foreign vendors, with domestic content projected at 30–60%, likely closer to 50%. This includes production, maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facilities, joint ventures, and infrastructure development, in line with Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) guidelines. The MRFA acquisition addresses the IAF's fast-declining combat strength, currently hovering around 30 squadrons, below the sanctioned level set in 2012. The project, initially estimated at ₹1.25 lakh crore.

Chief of Air Staff A P Singh in last October had said that Rafale is among the best-suited aircraft, based on previous MMRCA assessments, although other options remain under consideration. "Whether it is Rafale or another platform, operational suitability and ease of integration are key," he had said. The MRFA programme is seen as critical to modernising the IAF, enhancing combat readiness, and strengthening self-reliance in defense amid evolving regional security dynamics, he added.

# Close to trade deal, top EU leaders to attend R-Day parade as chief guests

**JAYANTH JACOB** @ New Delhi

INDIA and the European Union could be close to sealing a long-coveted trade agreement, with top EU leaders scheduled to visit New Delhi later this month for the Republic Day celebrations and the 16th India-EU Summit.

At the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of the European Council Antonio Luis Santos da Costa and President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen will be on a state visit to India from January 25 to 27, as Chief Guests at the 77th Republic Day celebrations. The leaders will also co-chair the India-EU Summit on January 27.

Sources said that both sides are "very close" to finalising a trade agreement and were exploring whether it could be wrapped up to coincide before the leaders' meeting in New Delhi. However, there was no official confirmation about it.

"India is a crucial partner for the EU. Together, we share capacity and responsibility to protect the rules-based international order. This meeting will be an opportunity to build our partnership and drive progress in our cooperation." Antonio Costa, President of the European Council said ahead of the visit. German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who was recently in India, had indicated that the India-EU trade pact could be signed by the end of January.

Negotiations on an India-EU trade agreement were relaunched in 2022 after remaining stalled for years. Talks gained momentum after US President Donald Trump raised tariffs on several trading partners, including India, while a separate India-US trade deal collapsed last year following a breakdown in communication between the two governments.

As guests of honour, Presidents Costa and von der Leyen will also participate in India's 77th Republic Day Parade celebrations on 26 January. This will mark the first time the leaders of the European Union have attended Republic Day Parade celebrations as guests of honour, signalling the strengthening of the bilateral relationship between the EU and India. In October 2025, the Council of the EU endorsed the new strategic EU-India agenda, and its objective of further developing EU-India ties. In so doing it placed specific focus on prosperity and sustainability, technology and innovation, security and defence, and connectivity and global issues.

Both sides agreed to fast-track negotiations after von der Leyen and Modi met last year, with the aim of concluding a deal in 2025. Since then, Brussels has signed trade agreements with Mexico and Indonesia, while India has sealed deals with the UK, Oman and New Zealand. India and the European Union have been strategic partners since 2004. The last India-EU Summit was held virtually in July 2020, with ties expanding significantly after the visit of the EU College of Commissioners to India in February 2025.

Trade between India and the EU reached ₹120 billion ($140.21 billion) in 2024, making the EU India's largest trading partner in goods. This will be the first time EU leaders participate as guests of honour in the Republic Day Parade, highlighting the strengthening of bilateral ties. India and the EU have been strategic partners since 2004, with relations deepening after the EU College of Commissioners' historic visit to India in 2025. The Council of the EU endorsed a new strategic agenda in October 2025, prioritising prosperity, sustainability, technology and innovation, security, defence, connectivity, and global cooperation.

### EQUAL PARTNERS

India-EU trade in goods worth **€120 billion** in 2024 (11.5% of India's total trade)

**India's exports to the EU:** Machinery, appliances, chemicals, base metals, mineral products, textiles

**EU exports to India:** Machinery, appliances, transport equipment, chemicals

**Trade in services: €59.7 billion** (2023); EU has a **€7.9 billion** deficit

**EU FDI in India: €140.1 billion** (2023)

**India's FDI in EU: €10.2 billion**

**6,000** European companies operate in India

President of European Council & President of European Commission will be on a visit to India for R-Day | FILE

**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**
Established in 2004, with regular summits since 2000 (15 held so far)

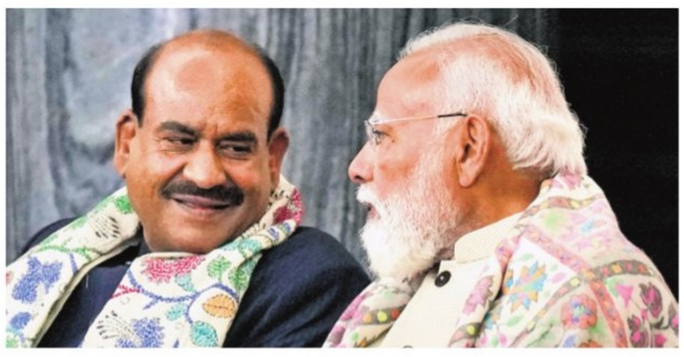
**KEY MECHANISMS**
Trade & Technology Council, High-Level Trade and Investment Dialogue, ministerial and parliamentary exchanges

**RECENT MEETS**
EU College of commissioners visited India in Feb 2025

EU leaders meet Indian counterparts regularly at G20, G7, COP28, and ASEAN forums

# Diversity strength of India's democracy: Modi

**RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR** @ New Delhi



**53 Commonwealth nations take part in the meet**
Speakers and presiding officers from 53 nations of sovereign Commonwealth states are attending the conference. It includes a total of 61 presiding officers, including 45 speakers and 16 deputy speakers from 42 member countries and 4 semi-autonomous Parliaments.

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that India's diversity has become the strength of its democracy, and democratic institutions and processes give stability, speed and scale to its development.

Inaugurating the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC), Modi said democracy has delivered results in India because people remain at the centre of governance. "In India, democracy means last-mile delivery," he told the delegates, adding that welfare measures undertaken by the government with a spirit of public welfare, reach every individual without discrimination. "Due to this spirit of welfare, 25 crore people have come out of poverty in recent years," he said.

The PM recalled that when India gained Independence, many doubted whether democracy could survive amidst the country's immense diversity. "However, this very diversity became the strength of Indian democracy," he said.

Modi said there were also doubts about India's progress even if democracy did take root in the country. "Contrary to these doubts, India has demonstrated that democratic institutions and processes provide stability, scale, and speed to its development," he said.

The Prime Minister began his address with wit and humour, drawing laughter from the delegates. "In a parliamentary democracy, your role is that of the Speaker. Interestingly, the Speaker does not get to speak much. Their job is listening to others speak, and ensuring everybody gets a chance. One common thing about speakers is their patience. They handle even noisy and over-enthusiastic members with a smile," he said.

The PM spoke about the historical significance of Samvidhan Sadan. "The place where you are seated is of immense importance in India's democratic journey. In the final years of colonial rule, when India's independence was certain, it was in this very Central Hall that the Constituent Assembly met to draft the Constitution of India," he said. He added that for 75 years, the building served as Parliament of India.

# Birla says tech shaping societies and governance

**RAJESH KUMAR THAKUR** @ New Delhi

LOK Sabha Speaker Om Birla, while addressing the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of the Commonwealth (CSPOC) drew attention to the rapid technological transformations reshaping societies and systems of governance.

He observed that Artificial Intelligence (AI) and social media have enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of democratic institutions, cautioning that their misuse has led to serious concerns such as misinformation, cybercrime and social polarisation.

Birla said that it was a collective responsibility of legislatures to engage seriously with these challenges and evolve appropriate solutions. While acknowledging the growing importance of AI, he emphasised the need for its ethical use and credible, transparent and accountable social media frameworks to safeguard democratic values of the nation.

# Choksi's son fights legal battle with ED to keep ₹24 crore Mumbai flat

**SUMIT KUMAR SINGH** @ New Delhi

ROHAN Choksi, son of absconding jeweller Mehul Choksi, is fighting a high-stakes legal battle with Enforcement Directorate (ED) to save his Mumbai apartment from attachment and seizure, citing "not guilty by association", said a senior official.

The appellate tribunal decided last week to send the case back for fresh review after Rohan Choksi appealed, citing that he is "not guilty by association". He gets a window to retain his home even as his father fled India and continues to evade authorities. However, in December 2025, the highest court of Belgium rejected Mehul Choksi's appeal against India's extradition request.

It is not a simple flat. Spread across the 9th and 10th floors of the Gokul Building on Walkeshwar Road in Mumbai is valued at ₹24 crore and it comes with six car parking spaces and an attached terrace. Rohan Choksi has made a plea for why he is being punished for his father's alleged sins. He said that the property was originally purchased by the Mehul Choksi Family Trust way back in 1994, when Rohan was just a child and back then the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) never even existed.

He also made an appeal that his flat was transferred in his name on November 1, 2013 and his father had allegedly committed fraud at Punjab National Bank between 2015 and 2017 – a full two years after Rohan became the property's owner.

"How can a property acquired before the crime be considered proceeds of that crime?," Rohan makes an appeal. He also begged that he was never part of any crime and he was also not named in the FIR and chargesheet. He appealed that ED is trying to punish him for being Mehul Choksi's son, which violates basic principles of justice.

Unlike his father, Rohan has remained in India and appeared before authorities when required. However, ED had stated that Rohan Choksi is not an innocent bystander, but an integral part of his father's financial empire made through proceeds of crime. The agency said that during probe, they found that Rohan controls 99.44 per cent shares in Rohan Mercantile Private Limited, a company where Mehul Choksi serves as director.

Similarly, Rohan holds 99.99 per cent shares in another company, Lustre Industries Private Limited, also directed by his father. The agency pointed out that they have traced ₹81.6 lakh that came from Asian Diamond & Jewellery FZE – a direct recipient of fraud proceeds – to Merlin Luxury Group in Singapore. The Singapore company is owned by Mehul Choksi through Lustre Industries, where Rohan is the majority shareholder.

# 200 new automatic stations in '26 to predict weather at hyper-local levels

**JITENDRA CHOUBEY** @ New Delhi

TO enhance the precision of weather forecasts at a hyper-local level in metropolitan areas, the Union Government has announced the deployment of 200 Automatic Weather Stations (AWS) across Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, and Pune in 2026 under Mission Mausam Phase II.

By the end of this year, the government plans to add 50 AWS in each of the selected metropolitan cities. This initiative will enable these cities to receive real-time weather forecasting and improve disaster preparedness, particularly in densely populated urban regions. Currently, India has a total of 1,000 AWS.

Delhi currently has 18 operational AWS, which are insufficient given the city's geography and dense population. To address this, the government will add 50 new AWS in 2026, alongside existing departmental observatories, to enhance hyper-local weather forecasting. Of the 50 new AWS, 20 will be installed by the end of this month. Union Minister of State for Science & Technology and Earth Sciences, Jitendra Singh, announced the expansion of India's urban weather observation infrastructure on the 151st anniversary of the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

M Ravichandran, Secretary of Science and Technology and Earth Sciences, stated, "We are urging other countries to upgrade their ocean observation systems so that we can obtain diverse data rather than depending on just one country." Currently, the US provides 50 per cent of ocean observations to India.

The credibility of the IMD's forecasts has increased significantly over the past decade. "This has led to an unprecedented demand for its services," added Ravichandran.

Highlighting the transformation in India's weather forecasting capabilities, Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, Director General of IMD, noted a significant rise in forecast accuracy.

"Weather forecasts have improved by more than 40 to 50 per cent compared to earlier decades. Cyclone tracking accuracy has increased by nearly 35 to 40 per cent, while errors in monthly and seasonal forecasts have reduced sharply from around 7.5 per cent to nearly 2.5 per cent," said Mohapatra. He attributed these improvements to sustained investment, technological advancements, and institutional support over the last decade.

# Reply of HCs, NLUs on 3-yr practice norm sought

**SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY** @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday sought the opinion of all the high courts, National Law Universities (NLU) and other law schools on the minimum three-year law practice criterion for appearing in entry level judicial services examination. The top court, on May 20 last year, barred fresh law graduates from appearing in entry level judicial services examination, fixing a minimum three-year law practice criterion.

On Thursday, a bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vijay Bishnoi was hearing a plea filed by Bhumika Trust, seeking exemption for law graduates who belong to the Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) category from the minimum three-year law practice requirement. The key submission in the plea was that the PwD law graduates are not hired by lawyers and hence, the three-year law practice criterion be relaxed for them.

The bench, however, said that any such enabling criterion should be the same for all law graduates and brought up a similar exemption that had been allowed for specially-abled candidates in Madhya Pradesh. The court noted that allowing such an exemption for specific categories might lead to the exempted categories feeling inferior once they are in service, and pushed for uniform rules across states.

"We find that young students are disappointed and demoralised with this decision. We are planning to get feedback from the students in the NLUs and all HCs. If at all any variation is required, we will do it for everyone,' the court said.

The court noted that before taking any holistic view with regard to the present application seeking exemptions for PwDs, collecting the feedback of all HCs and NLUs across the nation, seeking their opinions and suggestions on the three-year practice criterion, might provide a broader perspective on the matter.

### ALSO IN TOP COURT

**Acquittal of murder accused overturned**
The SC said that direct evidence in the form of a credible and trustworthy dying declaration in absence of strong proof of motive is not fatal. The bench overturning the acquittal of Chaman Lal, accused of murdering his wife, said motive assumes significance primarily in cases based on circumstantial evidence.

**'Panel to examine digital arrest cases'**
The Ministry of Home Affairs informed the SC that it had formed a high-level panel to examine issues of digital arrest scam cases. It said the committee's mandate was to examine real-time issues faced by enforcement agencies, consider the amicus curiae's advice, identify relevant legislation among others.

# Order on passive euthanasia of man in coma reserved

**SUCHITRA KALYAN MOHANTY** @ New Delhi

THE Supreme Court on Thursday reserved its verdict on a plea filed by the father of a 32-year-old man seeking passive euthanasia for his son by withdrawing his artificial life support. The patient has been in a comatose condition for more than 12 years.

Two medical boards constituted by the court have reported that the man, Harish Rana, has no chance for recovery at all. Rana, suffered serious head injuries after falling from fourth floor of a building in 2013.

During the hearing, the bench highlighted the importance of the family taking a 'consistent and well-considered' decision. On January 13, the SC judges met Rana's parents and his younger brother, who said they did not want him to suffer anymore.

**TRANS CONVERSION**

A group of transgender people in UP's Bhadohi has alleged that members of their own community pressured them to convert to Islam. They accused their guru and others of forcing them to embrace Islam. A probe is on.

4 KILLED ACROSS GUJARAT DURING UTTARAYAN FESTIVITIES

| INDIA | Max | Min | | Max | Min |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ahmedabad | 28 | 15 | Mumbai | 29 | 24 |
| Bhopal | 24 | 09 | Panaji | 32 | 21 |
| Jaipur | 23 | 10 | Patna | 17 | 09 |
| Amritsar | 11 | 06 | Lucknow | 18 | 08 |
| Chennai | 28 | 22 | Port Blair | 29 | 24 |
| Kolkata | 22 | 13 | Imphal | 21 | 10 |
| Srinagar | 06 | -2 | Chandigarh | 17 | 07 |

# Exit polls predict clean sweep for BJP-Shinde Sena in BMC elections

## Vote division shows Uddhav could have upset MahaYuti if his party had allied with Cong

**SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI** @ Mumbai

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis and family after casting votes in the Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) elections; (right) Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray with family show inked fingers after voting during the BMC polls on Thursday | PTI

THE election for the 227 seats of the Asia's richest civic body, Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC), concluded on Thursday. The exit poll results show that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its alliance partner Shiv Sena of Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde will sweep the election with a comfortable majority. Their main challengers, the Thackeray brothers, will trail far behind, despite they making a spirited attempt to polarise the election campaign on Marathi-vs-non-Marathi issue.

The exit polls suggest that the BJP alliance will easily get past the half-way mark of 114. Axis My India has given it between 131-151 wards, with a vote share of around 42 per cent, while JVC has given it 138 seats. Sakal Poll and Lok Shahi were more conservative in giving a decisive victory to the BJP alliance with 119 and 121 seats, respectively. In the other two high-profile civic body elections, the BJP is likely to retain its majority. Exit polls have predicted dominating performance by the BJP alliances both in Pune and Navi Mumbai.

If the BMC exit poll numbers hold, then for the first time, the BJP will be able to have its own mayor in the country's financial hub. This result will also mean that the power and influence of Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray will diminish significantly, since without the control over Mumbai and its massive financial resources, it will be difficult for them to hold together and sustain against the BJP not just in the city but in the state as well.

The exit polls also show that the BJP and the Shiv Sena are able to dent the Marathi voter base in the city in large numbers, along with consolidating non-Marathi votes, like from north Indian, Gujarati, Marwari, and south Indian communities. The Shiv Sena (UBT) and the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS), on the other hand, solely depended on the Marathi votes, which seem to have got divided in a significant number of wards.

The exit poll data also suggests that the minority vote also got split among multiple parties, like the Congress, Samajwadi Party, the two factions of the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), and the Shiv Sena (UBT).

This aspect further suggests that the decision of the Shiv Sena (UBT) to dump the Congress in favour of the MNS has cost it dearly.

The data from Axis My India and JVC, the two survey agencies that have released voting percentage in their exit poll results, clearly shows that the combined voting strength of the Shiv Sena (UBT) plus and the Congress alliance take them to 47–52 per cent in the case of JVC and 45 per cent in the case of Axis My India. The corresponding figures for the BJP alliance is 42–45 per cent for JVC and 42 per cent for Axis My India.

Among the 1,700 candidates, who are in the fray in the city for its 227 seats, the BJP has fielded 136, its partner the Shiv Sena 90, while the rival Shiv Sena (UBT) has fielded 164 and its ally MNS nominated 52 candidates. Moreover, the Congress is the single largest party outside these two groupings, as it has fielded 150 candidates along with its partner the Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi at 50 and the Sharad Pawar faction of the NCP 12.

In 2017, when the election for the civic body were last held, the Shiv Sena had bagged 84 seats, while the BJP was a close second at 82 seats. The performance of the MNS was impressive, as it got 31 corporators in the house.

# Zubeen's wife urges Centre to monitor S'pore court proceedings closely

**PRASANTA MAZUMDAR** @ Guwahati

A day after the coroner's court in Singapore was told that music icon Zubeen Garg was "severely intoxicated" and had drowned after refusing to wear a life jacket, his wife Garima Saikia Garg on Thursday urged the Centre and the Assam government to monitor the proceedings in Singapore at the highest level.

Garima urged them to take all necessary diplomatic and legal steps to ensure that every relevant fact is placed before the court, and pursue expeditious and effective prosecution in India on the basis of the chargesheet filed by the Assam special investigation team (SIT) last month.

The singer's uncle, Manoj Kumar Borthakur, had submitted a detailed statement before the coroner's court on Wednesday. The family placed on record specific questions regarding the planning of the outing on that fateful day, Garg's physical & medical condition at the time, safety measures on the yacht, circumstances in which he entered the sea, words spoken at that moment and response of the people around him on the yacht when he showed visible distress.

The family members also wanted to know the timing and adequacy of medical assistance and the scope of the finding of "no foul play." "Our family has explored every lawful avenue available and there will be no hesitation or compromise. Every step has been taken with diligence, dignity, and faith in the law of the land," Garima said. "Zubeen was not merely a member of our family. He belonged to Assam. He belonged to its people, its music, and its emotional memory. Hence, it is important to understand the anguish of millions who want answers," she added, insisting that the every step taken, every word spoken, every moment lost be fully and transparently examined and the guilty is punished.

Meanwhile, CM Himanta Biswa Sarma refused to comment on the Singapore coroner's court proceedings. Garg (52) had died while swimming in Singapore on September 19 last year.

### Kin seek clarity on death

Zubeen Garg's widow Garima Saikia Garg has called for more transparency and a thorough examination of circumstances surrounding the singer's death. His kin also wanted to know the adequacy of medical help available.

**Our family has explored every lawful avenue. There will be no compromise... Zubeen was not just a member of our family. He belonged to Assam.**

Garima Saikia Garg

## RAIPUR DIARY

EJAZ KAISER
Our correspondent in Chhattisgarh
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### Digital museum to be showcased on R-Day

Chhattisgarh's tableau, depicting the nation's first digital museum dedicated to tribal freedom fighters, will be showcased during the Republic Day parade on Kartavya Path in New Delhi. The tableau is based on the Centre's theme—'The Mantra of Freedom-Vande Mataram.' Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the digital museum at Nava Raipur on November 1 on the occasion of the silver jubilee celebrations of the formation of Chhattisgarh. The Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh Memorial and Tribal Freedom Fighter Museum is dedicated to Adivasi bravehearts. People will get to see the sacrifices by tribal heroes.

### Naya Raipur hosts golf tournament from Feb 3

The second edition of the Chhattisgarh Open Golf Championship, a key tournament on the Professional Golf Tour of India's (PGTI) annual schedule, will be held from February 3 and 6 at the Fairway Golf & Lake Resort in Naya Raipur. Leading golfers from the country and abroad will compete in the PGTI's season-opener for 2026. The tournament, with a field of 126 players, will be held in the stroke-play format consisting of four rounds of 18 holes each. The prize purse for the event this year is ₹1.5 crore. PGTI made its debut in Chhattisgarh last year with deputy CM Arun Sao as a driving force.

### RCB to play two IPL matches in Raipur

With the return of the Indian Premier League (IPL) after 13 years in Chhattisgarh, Raipur is set to host two matches featuring defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB). Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai took to social media platform X to confirm that Raipur's Shaheed Veer Narayan Singh International Cricket Stadium will host two IPL matches. He said the stadium will be a temporary home venue for RCB that earlier reviewed the capital's preparedness and logistics. Essential arrangements in Raipur for IPL matches will be expedited in the coming weeks. Raipur had hosted the last IPL match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Delhi Capitals in 2013.

# 52 Maoists lay down arms in C'garh's Bijapur

**EJAZ KAISER** @ Raipur

AS many as 52 Naxalites, 49 of them carrying a cumulative bounty of over ₹1.41 crore, surrendered before the police in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district and renounced the CPI (Maoist) on Thursday, an official said.

The surrendered cadres, including 21 women, were active in Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee (DKSZC), Andhra-Odisha Border division and Bhamragarh area committee (Maharashtra) of Maoists.

Of them, Lakkhu Karam alias Anil (32), a divisional committee member, and platoon party committee members Laxmi Madvi (28) and Chinni Sodhi alias Shanti (28) carried a reward of ₹8 lakh each.

"Impressed by the Poona Margham (social reintegration through rehabilitation) campaign of the Bastar police, 52 Maoists—including 21 women cadres—associated with the South Sub-Zonal Bureau turned themselves in before the senior police and CRPF officials to join the mainstream of society", said Jitendra Kumar Yadav, Bijapur district SP.

The necessary legal procedures are under way for the rehabilitation and reintegration of the surrendered cadres.

# Adi Shankaracharya's wisdom now at fingertips of Gujarat youth: Shah

**DILIP SINGH KSHATRIYA** @ Ahmedabad

UNION Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday said Adi Shankaracharya reshaped Indian philosophy in a lifespan of only 32 years and spread the message of Sanatan Dharma across the country.

Releasing Shankaracharya's 'Granthavali' in Gujarati, Shah said the complete works of the 8th-century scholar of Advaita Vedanta, published in 15 volumes, said it symbolised how "India's ancient wisdom is once again reaching the common people in their mother tongue." He said that with this series, "the knowledge of Adi Shankaracharya is now available at the fingertips of Gujarati youth." He underlined that translating and compiling Shankaracharya's philosophical ocean into Gujarati bridges generations and ensures continuity of Sanatan thought.

The 'Adi Shankaracharya Samager' (Granthavli) was published by the 117-year-old Sastu Sahitya Mudranalaya Trust and edited by eminent scholar Gautambhai Patel. Shah linked the publication not only to the intellectual legacy of Shankaracharya but also to the rebirth of an institution that has served knowledge for over a century.

Shah interlinked Shankaracharya's personal journey with India's civilizational framework, noting that "he completed his study of the Vedas at the age of eight, became a scholar by twelve, and went on to revive Sanatan Dharma across the length and breadth of India." By establishing four monasteries in the four directions, Shah said, Shankaracharya did not merely set up religious centres but founded "universities for the preservation of the Vedas and Upanishads."

Shah stressed, "The worship systems and chants we recite today whether of Ganga, Yamuna or Narmada are authored by Adi Shankaracharya."

# ED misleading SC on raids, TMC will rebut: Abhishek

**SUBHENDU MAITI** @ Kolkata

AFTER the Supreme Court issued notices to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and police officers on an ED plea, TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday alleged that the central agency misguided the SC over raids on I-PAC premises.

The ED has alleged interference and obstruction by the Bengal government, including by the TMC supremo, in its probe and search operation at the office of I-PAC and the premises of its director Pratik Jain in connection with an alleged coal pilferage scam.

"The central agency has raised some misleading facts against the Chief Minister in the apex court. Truth will come out," Abhishek told reporters. "Genuine facts in connection with the ED raids on January 8 will be produced before the court in coming days and then the court will decide," he said, adding that hearings in the case are still on and legal battle will go on.

Abhishek raised questions in connection with the ED's search operations. "Why do they raid I-PAC premises only in Bengal? We have also information related to the ED raids and they may not have an escape route if we file a defamation case against them," he said. "You can also verify ED panchnama (record) on whether the Chief Minister has taken away any documents during the search operations. What prompted the investigative agency to rush to the Supreme Court within 24 hours after they moved the Calcutta High Court?" he asked.

### Govt office vandalised, cop hurt in anti-SIR stir

A government office was vandalised and a police inspector was injured on Thursday as protests against the SIR escalated in West Bengal's Uttar Dinajpur district, prompting the EC to issue stern instructions to district administrations in the state.

# ED seeks probe into J'khand FIR against officials

**MUKESH RANJAN** @ Ranchi

HOURS after a team of the Ranchi Police visited the zonal office of Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Ranchi in connection with an FIR lodged against the probe agency's officials for alleged assault, the ED moved the Jharkhand High Court for a CBI inquiry into the matter and the quashing of the FIR. The police collected CCTV footage from the office and grilled ED officials, marking a fresh standoff between the two

The case stemmed from a complaint by Santosh Kumar, an accused in the water supply scam who claimed that he was thrashed by ED officials during his interrogation. A resident of Upper Chutia in Ranchi, he has accused ED Assistant Director (II) Prateek and his assistant Shubham of assaulting him, fracturing his skull and destroying evidence pertaining to the case after summoning him to their office.

# Marxist-turned-Modi fan seeks help after right-wing groups target Babur

**ANURAAG SINGH** @ Bhopal

AFTER a discussion on a book titled 'Babur: The Quest for Hindustan' set to take place at the Bhopal Literature and Art Festival (BLF) was cancelled amid fear of protests, its author Aabhas Maldahiyar has penned an open letter to PM Narendra Modi decrying the move.

The 37-year-old architect-turned-writer wrote, "I was invited to speak on January 10, on my latest book, 'Babur: The Quest for Hindustan,' the second volume of my definitive biographical work on Babur. 'The first volume, Babur: The Chessboard King' examines his early life and central Asian campaigns, while the second volume focuses exclusively on his tenure in Hindustan. The book also refutes the long-circulated myth that Maharana Sangram Singh invited Babur to Hindustan."

Maldahiyar, a Marxist-turned Modi supporter who also penned '#Modi Again: (Why Modi is right for India) An Ex-Communist's Manifesto' (2019), rued, "The organisers informed me that my scheduled session might not be allowed to proceed. The reason cited was objections and proposed protests by certain Hindu organisations, triggered by a misleading and defamatory report published in a newspaper. The newspaper report falsely claimed that a session on Babur at the literature Festival was intended to glorify him."

"Ironically, a session intended to challenge Marxist distortions of Babur's image was sabotaged on the false allegation that it sought to glorify him. The reality was precisely the opposite," he expressed, also blaming Madhya Pradesh's MoS for Culture and Tourism Dharmendra Singh Lodhi for the fiasco.

**SLAMS REPORT**

1. Author blames "misleading & defamatory" newspaper report for misinformation
2. Says talk was to question Marxist distortions of Babur's image
3. Report "falsely" claimed session would glorify him

# Pink City all decked up for 19th edition of JLF

**ADITHI REENA AJITH** @ Jaipur

THE Pink City is decked up in celebration as the 19th edition of the Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF) opens Thursday at Jaipur's Hotel Clarks Amer, presented by the Vedanta group. Running till January 19, the festival founded in 2006 has once again drawn writers and readers from across the world.

Festival director Namita Gokhale described JLF 2026 as one marked by "spontaneity and spunk". "Every edition brings opinions, counter-opinions and its own magic, but the spirit remains a joyous curiosity and openness to ideas," she said at the inauguration, attended by Rajasthan CM Bhajan Lal Sharma and Deputy CM Diya Kumari.

Festival director William Dalrymple recalled its modest beginnings at Diggi Palace nearly two decades ago. "The quarter-full Durbar Hall at the very first festival had barely 25 people," he said, recounting how an influx of visitors—who had mistakenly arrived looking for Amer Fort — unexpectedly filled the hall. Calling Rajasthan "the most perfect place" to launch a literary festival, Dalrymple noted that writers from across the world, including Nobel laureates, are drawn to Jaipur not just for the city but for its deep-rooted literary culture.

Event director William Dalrymple at Jaipur Literature Festival on Thursday | EXPRESS

The opening day began on a musical note with a high-energy Carnatic performance by a five-piece ensemble featuring vocalists Aishwarya Vidya Raghunath and Rithvik Raja. At the venue, a large book stall managed by Crossword awaits the bookworms, featuring recent releases and works by all participating authors, including festival directors Namita Gokhale and William Dalrymple.

Readers flocked to attend conversations, including sessions with Banu Mushtaq, 2025's International Booker Prize, and Booker laureate Kiran Desai, who returns to fiction after two decades with The Loneliness of Sonia and Sunny. Translators Daisy Rockwell and Deepa Bhasthi discussed the layered journeys of translated texts in conversation with Kanishka Gupta, while poet Javed Akhtar engaged audiences in a wide-ranging dialogue on cinema, literature, love and patriotism. This year's edition also places a strong spotlight on writing in regional languages, including Telugu writer Volga, Tamil writer Salma, and Mushtaq, alongside a renewed emphasis on translation and translated works.

Festival director Sanjoy K. Roy announced plans to take JLF's Island Festival to Ireland in 2026, spanning four new cities. Roy said that while around 3.5 lakh people attend the festival in person over five days, its digital reach extends to nearly 30 million viewers worldwide.

13
terrorists killed by Pak security forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

GLOBAL WEATHER
LR: Light Rain • HR: Heavy Rain • LS: Light Snow • TDS: Thundershower • LC: Light Cloud • SNY: Sunny

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Beijing | 5 | -8 | SNY | Los Angeles | 10 | 7 | LC |
| Colombo | 32 | 22 | LC | Melbourne | 27 | 16 | LC |
| Dhaka | 25 | 15 | LC | Moscow | -9 | -20 | LC |
| Dubai | 23 | 19 | SNY | New York | 2 | -4 | LC |
| Houston | 23 | 19 | SNY | Singapore | 31 | 24 | HR |
| Istanbul | 10 | 3 | LC | Toronto | -2 | -3 | LR |
| London | 10 | 7 | LC | Washington | 3 | 0 | LC |

# European military mission takes shape in Greenland

2 Danish troop transport planes land late on Wednesday. UK, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway & Sweden to send forces too

**Will send more forces to Greenland, says Macron**

ISTRES: President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday said France would soon send more "land, air, and sea" forces to join the European military exercise in Greenland. "A first team of French service members is already on site and will be reinforced with land, air, and maritime assets," he said. "France and the Europeans must continue to be present wherever their interests are threatened — without escalation, but uncompromising when it comes to respect for territorial sovereignty," he added. Later in the day, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said the EU has "a strategic responsibility" in Greenland.

**NUUK**

A EUROPEAN military mission was taking shape in Greenland on Thursday, drawing a sharp rebuke from Russia, as Denmark said Washington still aimed to take control of the mineral-rich Arctic island.

Greenland's Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen insisted meanwhile that "dialogue and diplomacy are the right way forward", hailing in a Facebook post the fact that a dialogue was now "underway".

The developments came a day after a White House meeting failed to resolve "fundamental disagreement" over Greenland, an autonomous Danish territory that President Donald Trump insists the United States needs to ensure its security.

Two Danish troop transport planes landed in Greenland on Wednesday.

A Royal Danish Air Force (RDAF) plane parked on the tarmac at Nuuk international airport, Greenland, on Thursday, the day after it arrived transporting Danish military personnel (inset) A t-shirt saying "Greenland is not for sale" on display in a shop in Nuuk | Pics: AFP

Britain, Finland, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden have also announced the deployment of military personnel as part of a reconnaissance mission to Greenland's capital Nuuk, under Denmark's "Arctic Endurance" exercise organised with NATO allies.

The modest military reinforcements -- 13 soldiers from Germany, for example -- are meant to prepare armed forces for future exercises in the Arctic, according to European defence sources.

"A first team of French service members is already on site and will be reinforced in the coming days with land, air, and maritime assets," French President Emmanuel Macron said Thursday.

Germany's defence ministry said the aim was to "explore the framework conditions for possible military contributions to support Denmark in ensuring security in the region".

The foreign ministers of Denmark and Greenland met with US Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio in Washington on Wednesday. Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said in a statement Thursday that "a working group" was being set up to discuss how Arctic security could be improved.

"However, this does not change the fact that there is a fundamental disagreement, because the American ambition to take over Greenland remains intact," Frederiksen said, hailing the arrival of European military personnel in Greenland.

"There is consensus within the NATO alliance that a strengthened presence in the Arctic is crucial for European and North American security," she said. Trump has argued that if the United States does not take Greenland, "China or Russia will", deriding Danish efforts to increase security for Greenland as amounting to "two dogsleds". *AFP*

# Issues yet to be resolved as Gaza ceasefire enters phase 2

**JERUSALEM**

A US-backed plan to end the war in Gaza has entered its second phase despite unresolved disputes between Israel and Hamas over alleged ceasefire violations and issues unaddressed in the first stage.

The most contentious questions remain Hamas's refusal to publicly commit to full disarmament, a non-negotiable demand from Israel, and Israel's lack of clarity over whether it will fully withdraw its forces from Gaza. The creation of a Palestinian technocratic committee, announced on Wednesday, is intended to manage day-to-day governance in post-war Gaza, but it leaves unresolved broader political and security questions.

The first phase of the plan, part of a 20-point proposal unveiled by US President Donald Trump, began on October 10 and aimed primarily to stop the fighting in the Gaza Strip, allow in aid and secure the return of all remaining living and deceased hostages held by Hamas and allied Palestinian militant groups.

All hostages have since been returned, except for the remains of one Israeli, Ran Gvili. Israel has accused Hamas of delaying the handover of Gvili's body, while Hamas has said widespread destruction in Gaza made locating the remains difficult. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said efforts to recover Gvili's remains would continue but has not publicly commented on the launch of phase two.

Hamas has accused Israel of repeated ceasefire violations, including air strikes, firing on civilians and advancing the so-called "Yellow Line," an informal boundary separating areas under Israeli and Hamas control. *AFP*

A protest in support of the nationwide mass uprising in Iran against the government, in Germany on Wednesday | AP/PTI

# Don convinced 'to give Iran a chance'

**PARIS**

GULF allies have convinced Donald Trump to "give Iran a chance", a Saudi official said on Thursday, after the US President threatened strikes on the nation over a crackdown on protests that activists say has left thousands dead. Iran was shaken over the last week by some of the biggest anti-government protests in the history of the Islamic republic. The Norway-based Iran Human Rights (IHR) NGO said on Wednesday that Iranian security forces had killed at least 3,428 protesters. Iranian authorities have lashed out at "rioters" who they claimed were backed by Israel and the US, vowing fast-track justice that activists fear will translate into a spree of executions.

Trump has not ruled out new military action against the Islamic republic under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, after Washington backed Israel in its June 12-day war against Iran. But with the belligerent rhetoric on all sides appearing to tone down for now, a senior Saudi official said Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman led efforts to talk Trump out of an attack on Iran, fearing "grave blowbacks in the region".

The Gulf trio "led a long, frantic, diplomatic last-minute effort to convince President Trump to give Iran a chance to show good intention".

In telephone talks on Thursday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told Saudi Arabian counterpart Faisal bin Farhan of the importance of "global condemnation of foreign interference in the internal affairs of regional countries" and vowed Iran would defend itself "against any foreign threat", according to a statement on his Telegram account. *AFP*

**US SANCTIONS IRANIAN OFFICIALS**

Washington: The US is imposing new sanctions on Iranian officials accused of repressing protests against Iran's government. The Treasury Department on Thursday targeted the secretary of the Supreme Council for National Security for allegedly calling for violence against protesters. The sanctions also affect 18 people and companies involved in a shadow banking network linked to Iranian financial institutions.

## *Russia expels British diplomat over 'spying'*

MOSCOW: Russian authorities Thursday ordered a British diplomat to leave the country on allegations of spying. Russia's Federal Security Service, known by its Russian acronym FSB, alleged that the member of embassy staff had worked for British intelligence. It did not provide evidence. The diplomat's accreditation was revoked and and the person must now leave the country within two weeks, Russia's Foreign Ministry said. The UK's charge d'affaires in Russia, Danae Dholakia, was summoned to Moscow to receive the notice. "Moscow will not tolerate the work of undeclared British intelligence officers in Russia," Russia's Foreign Ministry said. It also said it would respond in kind to any action taken by London on the issue. Russia and NATO allies have carried out multiple rounds of mutual expulsions of diplomats as relations have sunk to the lowest levels since the Cold War after the Kremlin sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. AP

# US PAUSES IMMIGRANT VISA PROCESSING FOR 75 NATIONS

**WASHINGTON**

THE US on Wednesday said it was suspending the processing of immigrant visas from 75 countries, President Donald Trump's latest move against foreigners seeking to come to America. The US has long rejected visas from people who appear likely to end up needing government welfare, but the State Department said it would now use the same authority for a blanket suspension of immigrant visas based on nationality.

"The Trump administration is bringing an end to the abuse of America's immigration system by those who would extract wealth from the American people," State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said.

"Immigrant visa processing from these 75 countries will be paused while the State Department reassesses immigration processing procedures to prevent the entry of foreign nationals who would take welfare and public benefits," he said.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt posted on X that the countries affected would include Somalia -- whose people Trump has attacked in heated terms after immigrants were involved in a funding scandal in Minnesota -- as well as Russia and Iran.

**Pakistan, Bangladesh & Thailand on list**

Among the 75 countries are Afghanistan, Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bhutan, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Somalia, Syria, Thailand, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, and Yemen. *AFP/PTI*

**Pak hopes processing would resume 'soon'**

Islamabad: Pakistan on Thursday hoped the US would "soon" resume immigrant visa processing for its citizens, saying it viewed the recent suspension as part of an internal review. "We are in touch with the US authorities to ascertain further details. This is evolving news that we are following," Foreign Office Spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said while addressing his weekly press briefing. "We understand this is an internal ongoing review process of US immigration policies and system, and hope routine processing of immigrant visas will resume soon."

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**To, 1)Mr.Vinoth Kumar Kumaresan,** Founder & Creative Head, M/s. Dawn Designs
**2)M/s. Dawn Designs,** 1st Floor, Lahe Lahe Building, 2906, 2907, 80 ft. Road, HAL 2nd Stage, Kodihalli, Bengaluru-560 008
Under the instructions from and on behalf of our client STELLAR INNOVATION PVT. LTD. Rep. by Mr. Ravi Bhushan, having office at No.27, Tirumala, Doddanekundi, Phase 2 Industrial Area, Bengaluru-560 048 (hereinafter referred to as our **"Client"**), we hereby issue this Public Notice vide Paper Publication to you as hereunder:-
1. Our Client informs us that they have entered into an Agreement with M/s. Dawn Designs represented by Mr. Vinoth Kumar Kumaresan for the purpose of Interior Works of their Office/Company Space & in that connection materials & other accessories were stored in the Office premises of our Client. Despite several reminders to yourself, you have not acted upon it nor taken any initiative to remove the materials & accessories lying in the office premises of our client/Stellar Innovation Pvt. Ltd. situated at No. 27, Tirumala, Doddanekundi, Phase 2 Industrial Area, Bengaluru-560 048.
2. Further, there are materials & accessories dumped by YOU, which is lying around in the Office Space of our client i.e. at Stellar Innovation Pvt. Ltd., No. 27, Tirumala, Doddanekundi, Phase 2 Industrial Area, Bengaluru-560 048, which is occupying space, collecting dust, causing health hazards to our client & their employees/staff, causing inconvenience to our client for their day to day activities & is obstructing the movement of their staff/ vehicle parking etc.
3. Further, a LEGAL NOTICE was also issued to you & your Company/ M/s. Dawn Designs, on 28/10/2025 narrating the above facts & the same has been served on & acknowledged by you on 29/10/2025. Accordingly the First of YOU have replied to the Legal Notice dt: 28/10/2025 on 05/12/2025, stating amongst many things, agreeing to remove the materials dumped by YOU, however, the First of YOU have not kept up your words & come forward to remove the materials dumped by you, afore-mentioned.
4. In light of the above facts, WE CALL UPON YOU, Mr. Vinoth Kumar Kumaresan being the representative of M/s. Dawn Designs to immediately take steps to remove the materials & accessories dumped by you at our clients premises within a period of 15 days from the date of Publication of this NOTICE, failing which our client will be forced & constrained to remove & dispose-off the said materials & accessories from the premises of Stellar Innovation Pvt. Ltd., No. 27, Tirumala, Doddanekundi, Phase 2 Industrial Area, Bengaluru-560 048.
Regards, **M.R.C. MANOHAR,** Advocate

**NOTICE**

My client Smt. Sujatha Rajaraman aged 44, D/O Shri Rajaraman Palanivelu, is planning to buy the below mentioned scheduled property from the sole and absolute owner Shri Jaffer Adam Ayub Khan aged 65 and S/o B.H Jaffer Khan.

**Schedule of property:**

The property described above, was originally allotted LIC to Shri Devidatta Khetawat and registered by LIC to Shri Devidatta Khetawat represented by his son Vivek Khetawat vide Document No. 1594/1993-94 in Book 1, Vol. 3434, pg. 281-288, dated 30.08.1993. Later Shri Devidatta Khetawat represented by his son Vivek Khetawat sold the said property to Mr. Naren N Nande and Mrs Shilpa N Nande through Document No. BNG (U)-SNGR 3707/99-2000 dated 27.01.2000. Further the property was sold by Mr Naren N Nande and Mrs Shilpa N Nande to Shri Jaffer Adam Ayub Khan in the year 2006, vide Document No. SHV-1-0981-2006-07. Since then Shri Jaffer Adam Ayub Khan has been the sole and absolute owner, peacefully enjoying the property, with all relevant documents in his favour. Now, my client Smt. Sujatha Rajaraman has shown interest to buy the said property and this notice is issued in the best interest of my client for any claims/objections which shall be brought to the attention of the undersigned within 7 (seven ) days of the date of the issue of this notice.

Advocate for Petitioner
**Neeraj Sastry**
TLaw Chambers, New No. 304A,
St. Patrick's Complex, Brigade Road,
Bangalore - 560 025.
By order of the Court,
Assistant Registrar,
City Civil Court, Bangalore.
**Place: Bangalore** **Date: 16-01-25**

**ODISHA MINING CORPORATION LTD**
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Bhubaneswar-751 001
CIN: - U13100OR1956SGC000313

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**CORRIGENDUM-2 TO RfP NO-09/OMC/CIVIL/2025**

**CAD-3025:** Due to administrative reasons the RfP documents could not be uploaded in the website. Hence the critical dates are hereby revised as indicated below.

**Please visit Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in**

1. Availability of Bid document in Govt. portal from **dt.16.01.2026 to 27.01.2026 up to 5.00 PM**
2. Last date of on-line submission of tender in the portal is **dt.27.01.2026 up to 5.00 PM**
3. Date of opening of Technical Bid is **dt.28.01.2026 at 11.00 AM.**

**Sd/-**
**General Manager (Civil)**

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER**
**RURAL WORKS CIRCLE: SUNDARGARH**
**E-mail ID- serw_sundargarh@gmail.com**
**Bid Identification No. Online-PMGSY/RWCCESNG-11 of 2025-26**
**0-2019** **Letter No. 93 // Date: 09.01.2026**

1. Name of the work :- Construction of Road and CD work under PMGSY Programme.
2. Total No. of Packages :- 1 No. individual package (Balance Work)
3. Estimated Cost of individual packages :- Rs.232.09 lakh
4. Period of completion :- Nine Calendar months
5. Other details :-

| Procurement Officer | Bid Identification No. | No. of Packages | Availability of Tender on-line for bidding | | Date & Time of Technical Bid opening | Date & Time of Financial Bid opening |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | From | To | Technical Bid | Financial Bid |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh | PMGSY /RW-CCESNG-11 of 2025-26 | 1 No | 17.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M. | 31.01.2026 upto 5.00 P.M. | 02.02.2026 at 11.00 A.M. | Will be intimated separately |

Further details can be seen from the website **www.pmgsytenders.gov.in**
**Sd/- Chief Construction Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Sundargarh**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given that a civil suit bearing O.S. No. 30/2026, filed for Permanent Injunction in respect of the suit schedule property, filed by Our Client Smt. Divya Garg, against John Doe and 2 others, is pending adjudication before the Hon'ble Court of the Civil Judge & JMFC, Krishnarajapura.

Pursuant to the order dated 14.01.2026 passed on I.A. No. 1 under Order XXXIX Rules 1 and 2, I.A. No 2 under section 80(2) of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, the Hon'ble Court granted an ex parte ad-interim injunction, "restraining the defendants, or any person acting through or under them, from presenting for registration or acceptance for registration any document on basis of which title or interest, including but not limited to ownership, possession or such other interest in the suit schedule property of the plaintiff may be alienated or encumbered or transferred, identified as the residential Apartment bearing No.4043, measuring 4041 sq. Feet, with EPID 2913705121 situated on Level-4, 3rd Floor of Tower-4 in Prestige White Meadows, Whitefield, Bengaluru. This order shall remain in force until the next date of hearing". All those who are aggrieved by the said order or interested in contesting the above suit are hereby notified to appear before the court in person or by a pleader duly instructed on the **Next hearing date, viz. 20.02.2026 at 11:00 AM.**

A copy of the Plaint, Interlocutory Applications along with all supporting documents daily orders has been served on the said Unknown Defendants, by pasting the same on the Schedule Property.

Sd/- **Rohith R Kamath,** Advocate
Ph: +91 9686481506 I E-mail: ohithkamath@rexlawchambers.com

**MALABAR CANCER CENTRE**
**(POST GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF ONCOLOGY SCIENCES & RESEARCH)**
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Thalassery, Kannur, Kerala - 670 103,Phone :+91 490 2399244/257, 2355881
Fax: 91 490 2355880,Email: mcctly@gmail.com, Web: www.mcc.kerala.gov.in

MCC/424/2025-P4-GAD **E - TENDER NOTICE** 13/01/2026

**Competitive e-Tenders/Tender/Re-Tenders (Two cover systems) are invited from established manufacturers/ authorized suppliers/agencies for the supply of the following items to MCC(PGIOSR) through e tender site www.etenders.kerala.gov.in and MCC(PGIOSR) website.**

| Sl. No | Item Details | Tender ID/Ref. No. |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | OT Furniture | 2025_MCC_823431_2 |
| 2 | Ventilators | 2025_MCC_826929_1 |
| 3 | Pneumatic Compression devices for Lymphedema Management | 2025_MCC_811399_3 |
| 4 | Latex Examination Gloves | 2025_MCC_823532_2 |
| 5 | Narcotic Drugs | 2025_MCC_820214_3 |
| 6 | Radiotherapy Accessories | 2025_MCC_810054_2 |
| 7 | Rotational Table top for TBI | 2025_MCC_814268_4 |
| 8 | Operation Theatre Table | 2025_MCC_822816_2 |
| 9 | Highend Ultrasound System | 2025_MCC_825509_1 |
| 10 | Digital C-Arm Fluoroscope X-Ray Machine | 2025_MCC_825472_1 |
| 11 | Cryogenic Vials & 96 Well Storage Boxes for Biobank Facility | 2025_MCC_825472_1 |
| 12 | Expression of Interest for Disposal of MRI & CT Machines | MCC/12/2026-P2-GAD |

For details visit: www.mcc.kerala.gov.in or contact Purchase Division.
Sd/- Director

**DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL -1**
BSNL Building, 4th Floor,
Telephone House ,Rajbhavan Road,
Bangalore -560 001
**O.A. No. 1837/2024**

**Between: Bank of India**, Jnanajyothi nagar Branch, No.32/33, 'Gurukrupa', Ullal Main Road, Muneshwara Nagar, Bengaluru – 560 056 **...Applicant**
**And**
**M/s. B. M. Tech** and another
**....Defendants**

**1. M/s. B. M. TECH**, A Proprietorship concern, At No.20, 11th Cross, Raghavendra Layout, Near Vidyama nagar, Andhrahalli Main Road, Bengaluru – 560 091. Represented by its Proprietor, Mr. Chidananda B. M., aged about 38 years, S/o. Mr. Mahalingegowda B. S.,
**2. Mr. Chidananda B. M.**, aged about 38 years, S/o. Mr. Mahalingegowda B. S., Proprietor of 'M/s. B. M. TECH', At No.20, 11th Cross, Raghavendra Layout, Near Vidyamanagar, Andhrahalli Main Road, Bengaluru – 560 091.
**And also at** Byadigere Village, Kadaba Hobli, Gubbi Taluk, Tumkur District 572 219.

**Summons issued to the Defendants No.1 & 2 under Rule 23 (VIII) of The Debts Recovery Tribunal (Procedure) Rules, 1993 by paper publication**

WHEREAS, the Applicant has instituted an Application under Section 19 of The Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 against you for recovery of a sum of **Rs.27,15,052.00** (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakh Fifteen Thousand Fifty Two only) together with current/future interest and for other relief's.

The above mentioned Defendant/s is/are therefore, hereby directed to appear before the Tribunal in person or through an Advocate or through authorised agents in support of their defence to show cause within 30 days from the date of publication or **on 22.05.2026 at 10.30 a.m.**, as to why the relief's prayed for should not be granted.

Take notice that in case of default, the Application will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal of this Tribunal on this **07.01.2026.**

By the Order of the Tribunal
Sd/- Registrar
Debts Recovery Tribunal-1, Bangalore

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

General Public are hereby notified that the undersigned has been instructed to carry out Due Diligence in respect of the Schedule Property, to ascertain the marketable title and lawful possession of (1) Smt. Gulabsha w/o Zabiullah Shariff & (2) Shri. Abhishek M s/o Manjunath G. Srinivasa, who are claiming to be the joint owners and in joint possession of the Schedule Property and to ensure that the same is free from all encumbrances. Meanwhile, I have been instructed to issue this Public Notice to call for objections from persons who may be interested in the Schedule Property or any portion thereof or having any claims against, (1) Smt. Gulabsha w/o Zabiullah Shariff & (2) Shri. Abhishek M s/o Manjunath or opposing sale of the Schedule Property.

Therefore, any person/s, financial institutions having any interest in the Schedule Property or any portion thereof or intending to oppose the sale of the Schedule Property or any portion thereof to third parties, may forward their written objections with supporting documents to the undersigned, within FIFTEEN days from the date of publication hereof for scrutiny. Any objections received thereafter will not be considered and my client would proceed with the completion of the sale, as if there are no third-party claims or interest, and if any, are deemed to have been waived.

**SCHEDULE PROPERTY**

All that part and parcel of the agricultural property bearing old Sy. No.78/2, New Sy. No.78/10, measuring an extent of 1 acre 10 guntas, situated at Iggaluru Village, Attibele Hobli, Anekal Taluk and Bengaluru Urban District and bounded as follows:
East by : Property of Symphony Apartment;
West by : Property belonging to Nanjamma;
North by : Property belonging to Gautham Singh, Anamika Patel and Victor;
South by : Property of Symphony Apartment

**(Prakash T. Hebbar) Advocate,**
SF-17, 2nd Floor, HHMS Building,
Cubbonpet Main Road,
Bengaluru - 560 002.
**Ph: 080 2224 8485**
Place: Bengaluru
Date: 16-01-2025

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PROBLEMS ARE NOT STOP SIGNS, THEY ARE GUIDELINES
ROBERT H SCHULLER

**LIC HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED**
LIC HFL — LIC HOUSING FINANCE LTD.
1st Floor, Jeevan Managal Building, Hayes Road, Bengaluru -560025. Ph.: 080-43003651

**POSSESSION NOTICE**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Office of the M/S, LIC Housing Finance Limited the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of security Interest(enforcement) Rule 2002 issued demand notice on below mentioned date calling upon the borrower/guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower having failed to repay the amount hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under Section 13(4) of the said Act with rule 9 of the said rules on below mentioned date.

The Borrower and the public in general are here by cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with property will be subject to the charge of M/s. LIC Housing Finance Limited for an amount notice mentioned below and interest thereon,

The Borrower attention is invited to provisions of section 13(8) of the said ACT, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets

| Name of the Borrower, Loan No & Possession Taken Date | Demand Notice Date | Notice Amount | Description of the Property |
|---|---|---|---|
| MR. HEMANTHKUMAR PUTTARAJU Loan A/c No. 4001030001234 Symbolic Possession Date:12/01/2026 | 10/07/2024 | Rs. 4038608.00 | SCHEDULE PROPERTY : All that piece and parcel of the property bearing Site No.123, Property No.60, Old PID No./Khata No./Survey No.24/3/60, situated at Seegehalli Village, K R Puram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, now comes within the limits of BBMP, Bangalore, measuring East to West: 48 feet and North to South: 25 Feet, in all measuring 1200 sq. feet together with all rights, appurtenances, whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded on the: East by: Property belongs to R Thimmaiah, West by: Road, North by: Site No.122, South by: Private Property. |
| MR. SRIKANTH V Loan A/c No. 410300002577 Symbolic Possession Date:12/01/2026 | 14/10/2025 | Rs. 4215744.00 | SCHEDULE PROPERTY : All the piece and parcel of the property bearing Site No.17, Carved out of converted Sy. No.10/3, (Old Sy.No. 10, Later Sy.No.10/1), converted from Agricultural to Non-agricultural residential purpose vide its conversion Order No.LN € SR.1340/2006-07, Commissioner, Bangalore Katha No.10/3/17, situated at Halehalli Village, Bidarahalli Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore, measuring East to West: 20 Feet and North to South: 40 Feet, in all measuring 800 square Feet, together with all appurtenances whatsoever whether underneath or above the surface and bounded on: East by: Site No. 16, West by: Site No.18, North by: Private Property, South by: 25 Feet Road. The schedule property consists of 8 square RCC Roofed House consisting of 8 square in Ground Floor, of 8 square in First Floor and 4 square in Second Floor, constructed with bricks, cement and vitrified, Tiles Flooring with all basic amenities. |

Place: Bangalore
Date: 16.01.2026

Sd/- Authorized Officer
LIC Housing Finance Limited

All the news. In just a click. Log to www.newindianexpress.com | THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

43.7% rise in India's smartphone exports to $18.8 billion during the April-November period this fiscal year, according to the commerce ministry data released on Thursday

# X to prevent Grok from generating obscene images

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

ELON Musk-led microblogging platform X (formerly Twitter) on Thursday announced that it has implemented technological measures to prevent its AI platform, Grok, from allowing editing of images of real people in revealing clothes such as bikinis.

In a post on its safety handle, X said the restriction applies to all users, including paid subscribers. The platform further said image creation and the ability to edit images through Grok account on X platform are now only available to paid subscribers, which it says will add an extra layer of protection. "Additionally, image creation and the ability to edit images via Grok account on X are now only available to paid subscribers. This adds an extra layer of protection by helping ensure that individuals who attempt to abuse Grok account to violate the law or our policies can be held accountable," said X.

The move comes after X faced global backlash, including from India, over creation of sexualised and obscene images of women and minors.

Following this, the Indian government issued an advisory to X, warning it to comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000. The government cautioned that failure to do so could result in loss of legal protection under Section 79 of the IT Act, making the platform liable for action under the IT Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS). Regulators in countries such as Brazil, Malaysia, and Australia have also launched inquiries or called for the suspension of Grok. Subsequently, on Sunday,

**We take action to remove high-priority violative content, including Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and non-consensual nudity, taking appropriate action against accounts that violate our X rules**

Microblogging platform X

X admitted its mistake and removed 3,500 pieces of content and deleted 600 accounts.

The platform further said it has geoblocked the ability of all users to generate images of people in bikinis, underwear, and similar attire via Grok account and Grok on X in those jurisdictions. "We take action to remove high-priority violative content, including Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and non-consensual nudity, taking appropriate action against accounts that violate our X Rules. We report accounts seeking Child Sexual Exploitation materials to law enforcement authorities as necessary," said X.

The platform highlighted that this does not change its existing safety protocols, under which all AI prompts and generated content posted on X must strictly adhere to X Rules. It added that regardless of how content is created or whether users are free or paid subscribers, its Safety team is working around the clock to add additional safeguards.

# Apex court cracks down on tax treaty abuse

Supreme Court denies relief to Tiger Global's Mauritius entities on capital gains made from sale of Flipkart shares

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

IN a ruling with far-reaching implications for foreign investors, the Supreme Court on Friday denied tax treaty benefits to Mauritius-based entities of Tiger Global on capital gains arising from sale of unlisted Flipkart shares in 2018. The verdict marks a clear shift towards a substance-over-form approach in treaty interpretation and strengthens the tax department's hand in probing alleged conduit structures.

Allowing the Revenue department's appeal, the SC set aside a Delhi High Court judgment that had held the Tiger Global transactions to be protected under grandfathering provisions of the India–Mauritius tax treaty. The HC had ruled that possession of a tax residency certificate (TRC) and compliance with limitation-of-benefits (LOB) conditions were sufficient to claim treaty protection in absence of sham transactions.

The apex court held that a TRC by itself can't preclude an inquiry where intermediary entities are alleged to have been interposed to avoid tax. Tax experts say the ruling represents a recalibration of the court's earlier approach to treaties and could introduce greater uncertainty for foreign investors using offshore holding structures.

Sandeepp Jhunjhunwala,

Sandeepp Jhunjhunwala of Nangia Global, said ruling reinforces principle that treaty benefits are available only to genuine tax residents

### NO TREATY BENEFITS

Tax experts say the ruling represents a significant recalibration of the court's earlier approach to tax treaties and could introduce uncertainty for foreign investors using offshore holding structures

**The judgment is likely to have overriding impact on investments that were earlier considered grandfathered, as these may be tested on economic substance** — Managing partner at AKM Global

**Multinational enterprises must urgently revisit their holding structures and governance frameworks to mitigate tax risks** — L Badri Narayanan, executive partner at Lakshmikumaran & Sridharan Attorneys

partner at Nangia Global, said the ruling reinforces the principle that treaty benefits are available only to genuine tax residents and not to layered structures created to secure unintended tax advantages.

The case relates to Tiger Global International II, III and IV Holdings—Mauritius-based entities set up to undertake investment activities for Tiger Global Management LLC, a US-based fund manager. Between 2011 and 2015, these entities acquired shares in Flipkart Singapore, whose value was derived from assets located in India. In 2018, they sold certain shares to Luxembourg-based Fit Holdings SARL, generating capital gains.

Despite holding TRCs and Category 1 Global Business Licences from Mauritius, the Indian tax department denied treaty benefits, alleging they functioned as conduits and that real control and beneficial ownership rested with the US parent. The tax authorities directed Tiger Global to withhold tax at 10% on share sale.

Tiger Global approached the Authority for Advance Rulings (AAR), which declined to admit the plea. The Delhi HC, in its August 28, 2024 judgment, had overturned the AAR's decision, prompting the Revenue department's appeal to the apex court.

The SC referred to treaty abuse and round-tripping, noting that amendments to the India-Mauritius DTAA were made against a "hostile backdrop" in which several global corporations and Indian nationals routed investments via Mauritius to exploit treaty benefits and the jurisdiction's tax-friendly regime. Such practices, the court observed, had become a favoured mechanism for tax avoidance.

A managing partner at AKM Global. "It has far-reaching consequences for private equity, venture capital and offshore investment structures."

Tax department officials, meanwhile, welcomed the ruling. "This has been our position from the beginning. The judgment is a game changer," said a senior official, while adding that the department does not intend to reopen old cases indiscriminately.

# CCI issues warning to Apple over delayed response

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE Competition Commission of India (CCI) has reportedly warned US-based tech giant Apple that it will move ahead with an antitrust case against the company, citing long delays and lack of cooperation in the investigation.

According to a report citing a confidential order, Apple has delayed responding to CCI officials for more than a year, which the watchdog said has weakened and slowed the investigation. The probe found that Apple abused its dominant position in its App Store.

Apple has said it fears it could face a fine of up to $38 billion if the CCI calculates penalties based on its global turnover. The company has denied all allegations and has challenged India's penalty rules in the Delhi High Court. The case is still pending. While the Delhi High Court continues to hear Apple's challenge, a confidential order dated December 31 shows that Apple asked the CCI to pause the entire antitrust case until the court decides on the penalty rules. The CCI rejected this request.

The regulator said it had asked Apple in October 2024 to submit objections to the investigation's findings and provide financial details needed to decide penalties. However, Apple was given "repeated extensions" and failed to respond.

"The Commission is of the considered view that repeated extensions, despite unambiguous directions, undermine procedural discipline and impede the timely conclusion of proceedings," the CCI said in its order seen by Reuters. It added that such flexibility cannot continue indefinitely and warned Apple that the case would proceed without its response if the company does not reply by next week. A source familiar with the matter said Apple believes the December order is an attempt to pre-empt the ongoing court case and is unlikely to respond before the next hearing on January 27.

Since 2022, Tinder-owner Match Group and several Indian startups have been involved in antitrust disputes with Apple. In 2024, investigators concluded that the US smartphone maker had engaged in "abusive conduct" in the iOS app market.

# Need to broaden investors' base in various asset classes: Sebi chief

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Chennai

SECURITIES and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) chairman Tuhin Kanta Pandey on Thursday said though the number of investors in securities markets increased, there is a need to broaden and deepen investors' base in equity, debt, hybrid and commodity markets.

Addressing the 14th annual convention of Association of Investment Bankers of India (AIBI), Pandey said, "Over the past three years, our economy has averaged quarterly GDP growth of about 7.8% and the real GDP is estimated to be at about 7.8% for FY26.

This growth is underpinned by reforms that lower costs and raise competitiveness, continued investment in physical, digital, and social infrastructure, reforms in taxation, both GST and income tax, and measures for ease of doing business."

Pandey further added, "The number of investors has risen from 43 million in FY20 to 137 million. The number of unique mutual fund investors has jumped from 10 million a decade ago to over 59 million now. Savings channelled into mutual funds grew at a CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 24% between FY21-FY25, far outpacing growth in bank deposits. Outstanding bank credit stands at ₹95 trillion, while outstanding corporate bonds are ₹58 trillion."

The Sebi chief also said that the markets regulator has taken reforms to accelerate the capital formation in the securities markets.

# South Indian Bank net profit at ₹374 cr in Q3

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ Chennai

PRIVATE sector lender South Indian Bank on Thursday reported a net profit of ₹374 crore in Q3FY26, up 9.3% from ₹341.87 crore in Q3FY25, driven by growth in deposits and improved asset quality.

The Kerala-based bank's retail deposits and NRI deposits grew to ₹1,15,563 crore and ₹33,965 crore in December quarter from ₹1,02,420 crore and ₹31,132 crore in December 2024, respectively. CASA grew by 15% YoY with growth in savings accounts by 14% and current account by 20%.

Gross NPA reduced by 163 bps from 4.30% to 2.67% on YoY basis. Net NPA dropped by 80 bps from 1.25% to 0.45% YoY. The bank's gross advances grew by ₹9,798 crore from ₹86,966 crore and ₹96,764 crore, registering an 11% rise. Gold loan portfolio saw a growth of 26% of ₹4,337 crore from ₹16,966 crore and ₹20,952 crore and vehicle loan grew by 24% from ₹1,938 crore to ₹2,393 crore. P R Seshadri, MD & CEO at South Indian Bank, said the bank's strategy continues to underpin its strong business performance during the period.

# Trade deficit hits $25 bn in Dec; exports to US up 10% in Apr-Dec

PUSHPITA DEY @ New Delhi

INDIA'S merchandise trade deficit marginally rose to $25.04 billion in December due to sharp rise in imports. Exports registered growth during the month despite global uncertainties and trade challenges.

Goods exports rose by 1.87% to $38.51 billion in December from $37.80 billion a year ago, showed data from the Ministry of Commerce on Thursday. Goods imports in December grew by 8.75% to $63.55 billion, primarily due to the rising domestic demand for crude oil, electronics and capital goods.

Electronics goods became the major driver of goods exports growth during April-December period with exports going up over 35% to $35.27 billion.

While overall goods export growth sustained momentum, there has been fall in exports from sectors like gems and jewelleries, petroleum products, rice and handlooms. Both export and import for petroleum products have come down with exports falling by 14.5% and imports by 4.25%. While goods exports managed to sustain growth momentum, services exports fell by 4% to $35.50 billion

**We are buying a lot of oil from the US these days. So our growth in purchases from the US is also to the tune of 40-50% in the first nine months**

Commerce ministry source

in December from $36.97 billion last year. Services imports fell marginally by 2% to $17.38 billion from $17.80 billion. During the April-December period, goods exports, excluding petroleum products, grew by 5.5% to $288.16 billion billion.

Meanwhile, despite ongoing trade uncertainties, exports to the US have gone up 9.75% in April- December this year. "We are buying a lot of oil from the US these days. So our growth in purchases from the US is also to the tune of 40-50% in the first nine months," said a source from the commerce ministry.

# India-EU FTA talks likely to conclude in Jan

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

THE negotiations for the free trade agreement (FTA) between India and European Union are likely to be concluded by the end of January, confirmed the

Ministry of Commerce said some of the sensitivities like agriculture are likely to be kept away from the FTA , while both the sides are negotiating on the last few remaining matters with a target of announcing the deal by January-end, when top leadership of the 27-member bloc visits New Delhi from January 25-27. As confirmed by the ministry, 20 out of 24 chapters have been closed. "We are expecting to conclude negotiations and have deal ready (by Jan-end) ,"said commerce secretary Rajesh Agrawal. There will be buffer between the announcement of deal and the final signing, Agrawal added, "But that will depend upon how it progresses in next five days."

# Jio Financial Q3 net profit falls 9% to ₹269 cr, total income doubles to ₹901 cr

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU @ New Delhi

JIO Financial Services on Thursday reported a 9% decline in consolidated net profit at ₹269 crore for the third quarter of the current financial year (FY26).

The company had posted a consolidated net profit of ₹295 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal, according to a Jio Financial Services regulatory filing. Sequentially, there is a huge drop in he net profit. The consolidated net profit of the company stood at ₹695 crore in the second quarter of the current financial year.

The company's total income nearly doubled to ₹901 crore, from ₹449 crore in the third quarter of the previous financial year.

Total expenses saw a major increase year-on-year, rising to ₹566 crore from ₹131 crore in the same quarter the previous year. Growth in total income was partially offset by higher expenses, in line with volume growth across all businesses, it said. Pre-provisioning operating profit increased by 7% to ₹354 crore. The company's net profit declined marginally to ₹1,289 crore for the nine months ending December as against ₹1,296 crore in the same period the previous financial year.

**Huge decline in net profit sequentially**

Sequentially, there is a huge drop in he net profit. Consolidated net profit stood at ₹695 crore in the second quarter of FY26. Net profit declined marginally to ₹1,289 crore for the nine months ending December as against ₹1,296 crore in the same period a year ago.

Jio Financial Services, which was demerged from Reliance Industries in 2023, is engaged in the business of investing and financing, insurance broking, payment bank, payment aggregator and payment gateway services. The company and BlackRock joint venture entered the asset management industry. Curated model portfolios of JioBlackRock mutual funds were launched to enable customers to achieve diverse financial goals.

# STRENGTHENING INDIA'S FERTILISER POLICY FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

S SANKARASUBRAMANIAN

AS the world's second-largest fertiliser consumer and with agriculture employing about 45% of the workforce, fertiliser self-reliance remains a strategic national priority.

Government policy has focused on ensuring affordability and availability via subsidies, alongside raising manufacturing capacity. As the Budget 2026–27 around corner, fertiliser sector merits focused policy attention to bolster soil health, ensure agricultural sustainability, and advance Atma Nirbhar Bharat objectives.

**Ensuring subsidy adequacy**

In developed economies like the US, EU and Japan, agriculture policy has shifted from production-linked subsidies toward income support, risk management, crop insurance and and climate resilience. Subsidies in India are designed to ensure food security, support farmer incomes, and maintain affordability of inputs. Fertiliser subsidy remains one of the key elements, shielding farmers from price volatility and ensuring access to nutrients at affordable prices.

Under India's fertiliser subsidy framework, Urea is governed by a cost-plus regime, phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilisers fall under nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) mechanism. Of nearly ₹2 lakh crore spent annually on fertiliser subsidies, 70% is absorbed by urea, with the remainder supporting phosphatic fertilisers. There is a fair case for revisiting the subsidy framework by gradually bringing urea under NBS, while protecting farmers via direct subsidy support.

The surge in key input prices like sulphur and ammonia has strained phosphatic industry viability as NBS rates have not kept pace with global trends, mainly for N and K nutrients. The Budget should provide price-aligned subsidy under

NBS to ensure steady nutrient supplies ahead of cropping season. To promote balanced nutrition, there is a need to encourage innovations like nano and slow-release fertilisers, along with organic and bio-fertilisers. Inclusion of such solutions under schemes like PM-PRANAM, which incentivise states to adopt integrated nutrient management, farmer training and awareness, can play a vital role.

**Achieving Atma Nirbharta**

Driven by policy reforms like NIP-2012 and NUP-2015, 8 million tonne of new urea capacity have been added over the past decade, reducing import dependence while improving energy efficiency. In contrast, capacity additions in phosphatic segment have remained limited, with 30% of domestic demand still met via imports. A major constraint in expanding capacity is accumulation of phospho-gypsum from phosphoric acid production (an intermediate for fertiliser manufacturing), while imports of mineral and chemical gypsum continue due to preferential GST treatment for products derived from it.

**Tax and GST reforms**

There is a need to rationalise taxes, Customs duties and GST provisions affecting fertiliser sector, and the Budget 2026-27 provides an important opportunity to address these concerns. On the Customs front, exemption or reduction of basic Customs duty on key raw materials like ammonia, phosphoric acid, sulphuric acid, rock phosphate and sulphur would help enhance competitiveness of domestic manufacturing. Rationalisation of duty structures, exemption of key inputs from Agriculture Infrastructure and Development Cess, relief on duties on micronutrients, and procedural clarifications are needed to avoid cash flow pressures and interest burdens.

The decision to cut GST rates from 18% to 5% on ammonia, sulphuric acid and nitric acid - bringing them on a par with fertilisers and reduction of GST on micronutrients from 12% to 5% are positive steps. However, issues of inverted duty structure continue to result in accumulation of unutilised input tax credit.

*— S Sankarasubramanian is chairman of FAI and MD and CEO of Coromandel International*

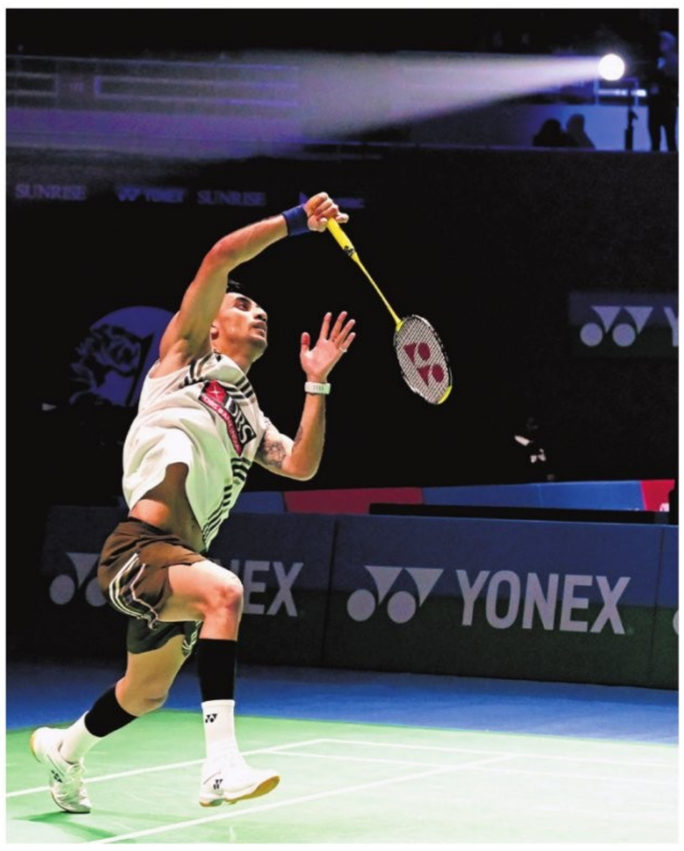
## *Morocco beat Nigeria to reach Africa Cup of Nations final*

RABAT: Morocco will play Senegal in this weekend's Africa Cup of Nations final after the hosts beat Nigeria 4-2 on penalties after their semi-final showdown of few chances in capital Rabat finished 0-0 at the end of extra time, with goalkeeper Yassine Bounou performing heroics by saving twice in the shoot-out. *AFP*

# Sen shines bright on day of close misses

Lakshya puts up bright show to enter quarters; Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty suffer narrow defeat

**ANMOL GURUNG** @ New Delhi



India's Lakshya Sen returns to Japan's Kenta Nishimoto during the men's singles round of 16 match at the India Open 2026 badminton tournament, in New Delhi | PARVEEN NEGI

LAKSHYA Sen seems to be in a good mental space at the moment. There was a certain glow in his face after a tidy performance in the ongoing India Open here on Thursday. A second win overall in the Super 750 meet that sealed him a spot in the quarterfinals is a good sign and the 24-year-old can sense it.

Having spent large parts of the 2025 season in mediocrity, Lakshya has had to dig deep in order to find solutions. Since the end of last term, he gradually seems to be regaining his powers. Thursday's 21-19, 21-10 victory over Kenta Nishimoto was another indicator that he's gradually regaining his foothold. More importantly, the Almora shuttler, who finished off the 2025 season with the Australian Open title, seems to be enjoying what he's doing. That's a stark contrast to his struggles not so long ago when his post-match conferences would seem like a funeral service. A phase when badminton seemed to be the source of his pain.

"It was important to win the Australian Open and I would like to continue that form. I'm in a much better space. Definitely, in terms of my game. I'm enjoying badminton much more," Lakshya told reporters after his win on the day.

After taking time to warm to the occasion, Lakshya started dictating terms before keeping up the intensity level in the second game.

"I was just trying to focus, get one point at a time. I didn't get the rhythm in the beginning but towards the end I was feeling good on court. After the 11th point, I changed the tactics because he was playing solid and I had to stick in there to get points. There were no easy points coming from his side," he said.

Lakshya's win proved to be a saving grace for the hosts as men's doubles pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty made a surprise exit, after losing a hard-fought match against Japanese pairing of Kyohei Yamashita and Hiroki Midorika. The usually-reliable Indians, who have made a habit of competing for podium finishes on regularity, were involved in a gruelling fight against the Japanese opponents. It was a see-saw battle throughout the match that lasted 73 minutes late in the evening. It was a similar tale for the women's combination of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand who suffered a three-game loss (20-22, 24-22, 23-21) against Li Yi Jing and Luo Xu Min of China, who are ranked World No 8.

Kidambi Srikanth (men's singles), the first Indian to enter the court on the day, put up a spirited fight but ended up on the losing side too. HS Prannoy (men's singles) suffered a similar fate and so did Malvika Bansod. Men's doubles pairing of Hariharan Amsakarunan and MR Arjun also lost. India will be hoping that Lakshya can maintain his happy run in the event.

## Now, bird dropping interrupts high-stake match at India Open

NEW DELHI: The India Open is turning out to be an organisational nightmare for hosts Badminton Association of India (BAI). If pollution, hygiene and a monkey 'inadvertently' wandering inside the stadium dominated the news in the last couple of days, the third day had its share of unwanted controversy -- an unusual interruption because of bird-dropping. The interruption was during a high-stake contest between two former World Championships medalists, HS Prannoy and Loh Kean Yew of Singapore on Court 1 at the IG Indoor Stadium. Later after the match, Prannoy said that they seemed to have spotted bird dropping, which led to the interruption. There was another short break in the opening game too, called by the chair umpire because of the same reason. The match itself was an absorbing contest with both Prannoy and Loh going all out. Loh rallied to get across the line 18-21, 21-19, 21-14, after trailing in the first game. The said interruption occurred when Prannoy was leading 1-0 in the decider. "I think it was bird shit which kind of halted the game for a while," Prannoy said. Even in the opening game the chair umpire briefly halted the tie when Prannoy was leading 16-14. Loh walked in front of the net to check and seemed repulsed by what he just saw on the playing surface. Loh, the 2021 world champion, also spoke about the difficult conditions. "The weather is not so good. It took a toll on my health. Other than that, I'm just taking it one match at a time. I breathe less here. I just wear my mask when I can. Other than that, I try to stay indoors as much as possible," he said. For a nation that is aggressively bidding for the 2036 Olympics, this will definitely come as a dampener. What complicates matters for BAI is that this very stadium is planning to host the World Championships later this year. The IG Stadium is maintained by the Sports Authority of India.

# BCB sacks Najmul after players' revolt, BPL games put off

DHAKA: The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) was forced to sack its finance committee chairman Najmul Islam on Thursday after senior players of the national team revolted against him for making derogatory comments against them.

Despite the removal of Najmul from a key BCB post, two matches of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) scheduled on the day were postponed. The players taking part in the BPL were unified in their demand for immediate removal of Najmul as BCB director.

Najmul Islam

Under player and public pressure, BCB removed Najmul as chairman of the board's finance committee but he remains a BCB director. "Following a review of recent developments and in the best interest of the organisation, the BCB president has decided to release Mr. Najmul Islam from his responsibilities as Chairman of the Finance Committee with immediate effect," said the BCB in a statement.

The BCB said it remains fully committed to upholding the honour and dignity of all players under its jurisdiction.

The furore started after Najmul, while reiterating Bangladesh's refusal to travel to India for next month's T20 World Cup on account of 'security worries', rejected concerns surrounding players' remuneration should the country withdraw.

He stated that the players would not be compensated as they have not justified the support so far, having failed to win a single ICC event. The statement caused an outrage with CWAB calling for his immediate ouster from BCB.

The BCB has also showcaused Najmul. "The Board has already initiated formal disciplinary proceedings against the Board member concerned. A show-cause letter has been issued, and the individual has been instructed to submit a written response within 48 hours," it added.

Bangladesh are refusing to tour India, citing security concerns after pacer Mustafizur Rahman was dropped from the IPL on BCCI's instructions for unspecified 'developments all around'.

The BCB is still in talks with the ICC to figure a way out after the world body showed reluctance to shift Bangladesh's four games in India to Sri Lanka. Najmul had earlier described former captain Tamim Iqbal as an 'agent of India' after he called for a restrained handling of the standoff with India, warning that decisions taken today would have impact 10 years down the line. *PTI*

EXPRESS READ

### FIFA gets 500 mn ticket requests for 2026 WC

CORAL GABLES (FLORIDA): FIFA said Wednesday it has received more than 500 million ticket requests for this year's World Cup. Soccer's organising body said outside the host United States, Mexico and Canada, the most requests were made by fans residing in Germany, England, Brazil, Spain, Portugal, Argentina and Colombia. FIFA is asking for up to $8,680 per ticket. *AP*

### Arsenal set up 3-2 win over Chelsea

LONDON: Arsenal scored two goals off errors by goalkeeper Robert Sanchez to set up a 3-2 win at Chelsea in the first leg of the English League Cup semifinals on Wednesday. A corner sailed over Sanchez in the seventh minute, allowing Ben White to head into an unguarded net, before the Spanish keeper let a low cross squirm through his grasp to gift Viktor Gyokeres a tap-in in the 49th. *AP*

### Real Madrid ousted from Copa by Albacete

MADRID: Ivaro Arbeloa got off to a dismal start as the new coach of Real Madrid, seeing his team lose to second-division club Albacete 3-2 and drop out of the Copa del Rey in the round of 16 on Wednesday. Madrid struggled from the start in the debut of Arbeloa, the club's former B-team coach who on Monday was picked to replace Xabi Alonso following a tumultuous eight-month stint at the helm. *AP*

# Time to talk about Jadeja's ODI future?

**GOMESH S** @ Chennai

All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, 37, has not been at his best in the 50-over format | PTI

FROM the moment Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli announced their Test retirements and became one-format players, they have been the centre of attention every time India have played an ODI. Whether Australia, South Africa or during the ongoing series against New Zealand, RoKo seems to be the theme.

And in this time, the duo have put the speculation to rest, at least for the time being. Kohli has hit 492 runs in eight innings at 82 average while Rohit has accounted for 398 runs at 56.85. As the limelight continues to remain on the senior duo, perhaps the issue of another veteran has quietly slipped under the radar. Ravindra Jadeja.

The spin-bowling all-rounder, who is the same age (37) as that of Kohli, was not a part of the team that travelled to Australia but has been back since the SA series. And his numbers and effectiveness do not paint a rosy picture. Since coming back, Jadeja has 87 runs in four innings at 29 average and 90.62 strike rate.

Having been slotted to bat anywhere between No 5-7, Jadeja's number and ability to accelerate in the death has not been at par to say the least. Among batters who come at No 5 or below, Jadeja has 137 runs in nine innings at 34.25 average and 97.85 strike rate since 2024. And that is despite remaining not out on five occasions. To put into context, Jadeja's SR is 83rd in the list (No 5 or below batters) since 2024 across countries.

Despite that, there has been little attention on the future of the 37-year-old, especially in the 50-over format leading up to the 2027 World Cup in South Africa, Namibia, and Zimbabwe. One reason for that is Jadeja's fitness. Arguably one of the fittest cricketers in the world, Jadeja is right up there with Kohli when it comes to his athleticism. However, his batting, especially with the new rule where only one ball will be used in death, is starting to become a concern for India.

Now, it is hard to argue against a batter who was in the middle with KL Rahul, helping India win their previous ICC title — Champions Trophy — less than 12 months ago. In saying that, the difference here is that the next World Cup is not in the subcontinent. What more, Jadeja has not been able to make an impact with the ball since coming back. In five innings, he has just one wicket to show despite all of it being played in India.

And by the time, the World Cup comes along, Jadeja will be almost 39 and India may not need two spinners in African conditions. Which is why, it makes one wonder whether it is time to take about the way forward for Jadeja in the 50-over format. Chief selector Ajit Agarkar, as things stand, has not shut the door on the senior all-rounder but that does not necessarily mean he is guaranteed a spot either.

What works in his favour though is the performance of other spinners in the team. Axar Patel, since 2024, has 369 runs in 13 innings at an average of 33.54 and strike rate of 84.63 at No 5 or lower. He may be slightly ahead in the pecking order, but has not sealed a place. Washington Sundar, rated highly by head coach Gautam Gambhir, is injured and out of the series. He, since 2024, has 102 runs in eight innings at 14.57 average and 74.45 SR (No 5 or lower).

In fact, the only Indian to average over 50 and strike at more than run-a-ball while batting at No 5 or lower is Rahul (539 runs in 15 innings at 59.88 and 108.23 SR). It does not help that Hardik Pandya is not a regular — his workload is being managed — and Nitish K Reddy is still figuring out his place in the set up.

Which means, for the time being at least, Jadeja will continue to feature in the lower-order, trying to finish games for India. However, the time is not far away where the selectors and team management will have to prepare for an alternative for the 37-year-old before the next World Cup comes along.

## *AUSTRALIAN OPEN: A BRIEF GUIDE*

GET READY FOR THE 2026 AUSTRALIAN OPEN WITH A GUIDE THAT TELLS YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE FIRST GRAND SLAM OF THE YEAR...

**OPENING DAY AT MELBOURNE PARK**

Singles play begins Sunday at 11 am local time (5 am IST) around the grounds, with the first match in Rod Laver Arena scheduled to begin at 11:30 am (5:30 am IST).

**DEFENDING CHAMPIONS AT THE OZ OPEN**

Madison Keys of the United States and Jannik Sinner of Italy won the 2025 singles trophies. Keys beat No. 1-ranked **Aryna Sabalenka** 6-3, 2-6, 7-5 for her first Grand Slam trophy. Sinner beat Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6 (4), 6-3 to successfully defend his title at Melbourne Park.

**WHO ARE THE BETTING FAVOURITES IN 2026?**

Sabalenka is the money-line favorite to win the women's singles trophy, according to BetMGM Sportsbook. The two-time champion is listed at +175, with Iga Swiatek next at +450. Coco Gauff is the third choice at +600. Sinner is the favorite to grab a third consecutive men's championship at -140, ahead of Alcaraz (+175), with a big drop-off to third choice Novak Djokovic (+1000).

**2026 PRIZE MONEY**

Australian Open prize money has increased by 16% from last year to a record total of $75 million. That was up from $64 in 2025. The women's and men's singles champions will win $2.8 million, a 19% increase from last year

**TOP SEEDS**

Sabalenka will be the top-seeded woman and **Carlos Alcaraz** the top-seeded man. They currently are ranked No. 1, and the tournament seedings usually follow the WTA and ATP rankings.

**MORE ABOUT THE YEAR'S FIRST SLAM**

The Australian Open is played outdoors on hard courts at Melbourne Park, located along the Yarra River near downtown Melbourne. There are retractable roofs at Rod Laver Arena, Margaret Court Arena and John Cain Arena.

Women play best-of-three-set matches with a first-to-10, win-by-two tiebreaker at 6-all in the third; men play best-of-five with a tiebreaker at 6-all in the fifth. Like at the U.S. Open and French Open, there are night sessions. The tournament is staged each year around the last two weeks of January, during the school summer break Down Under.

# Formation of Task Force is fine but India has been here before; implementation key

FLIPSIDE

INDRANEEL DAS

THE sports ministry has released the "A Unified Framework for development of Coaching Ecosystem in India", a bunch of guidelines and recommendations for overall growth of sports. The committee, led by P Gopichand, considered a Super Coach for producing Olympic and Worlds medallists, suggested a lot of reforms that are athletes-centric and more inclusive.

The entire philosophy of coaching has been based more on practice or practical than theory. However, some of the points that are mentioned in the document are not new. Some areas have been regularly flagged by Indian coaches as well. In 2017, another Olympic Task Force (OTF) with Gopichand in it, had recommended forming a coaches' body much in the line of National Coach Accreditation Board (NCAB). Abhinav Bindra, Beijiing Olympic gold medallist, was also part of the OTF for the next three Olympics in 2017. Bindra led a taskforce committee that submitted "Capacity Building of Sports Administrators" on December 30, 2025.

The last framework (completed around 2018) more or less spoke about coach led and athlete centric development. The new recommendations also show that nothing much has changed in the coaching ecosystem of the country. For example, the earlier OTF recommendation suggested forming of a board that would take care of the needs of all coaches right from the grassroots including an integrated common curriculum.

Lack of coaches have been one of the biggest concerns for the sports ministry. The Sports Authority of India (SAI), which is considered facilitator of training and other facilities, are also the primary funding agencies for elite athletes. Despite expanding and upgrading their Centres of Excellence across the country, SAI lacks good coaches. This was prevalent even in 2016 when India came back with only two medals from Rio. Eight years down the line, nothing seemed to have changed. There is rapid expansion but no training and scientific back-up. The OTF had suggested a framework for winning medals at 2020 and 2024 Olympics. Though the number had increased from two in Rio to seven with one gold in Tokyo (2021), three years later, it went down to six and without a gold.

The sports ministry has once again come up with two Task Forces – one for coaching and another to address administrative setup issues under Bindra. The National Sports Governance Act has also kicked in partially and hopefully there will be bigger changes in the administration of not just National Sports Federations but also in sports departments like the ministry and SAI. The two eminent sportspersons have done great work with the reports but implementation would be the key.

There have been instances that the documents have been stressing the same thing that was found in a different framework formed by the government. Interestingly, it goes way back to 2012. In the sports ministry's 'Results Framework Document (RFD)', the focus was on 'good governance, inclusivity and "intergration of sports and physical education in school curriculum'. When it comes to coaches, a 2015 RFD suggested: "Enhancing quality of sports coaching by a focus on increasing quality and quantity of coaches benchmarked to international standards." The problem the country faces is not robust framework or guidelines. It is in the implementation stage that it lacks. There is no point announcing new projects or setting new guidelines unless they are put to practice. History says that we have not been good at that.

If implemented, the new framework for coaches and administrators would change the entire sporting landscape of the country. It will help in producing quality coaches and since coaching will be incentivising, there will be demand for the profession. Fixing accountability and result-oriented grading are key components in the Gopi-led panel's document. The Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) type funding for coaching would help immensely but there has to be strict monitoring.

On paper, the framework always looks good but hopefully, unlike in 2018, this would be put to practice. Onus is on the sports minister and officials to get the process started. Or else, another taskforce will be formed after LA28.

EXPRESS INTERVIEW

Bradley Fishwick

# 'AIR PURIFIER is the most effective way to ensure cleaner air, especially in cities with variable pollution

RAKESH KUMAR @ New Delhi

IN an interview with TNIE, Bradley Fishwick, senior design engineer at Dyson, shares key things to keep in mind when purchasing an air purifier, how to take care of it for long-lasting performance, and why indoor pollution is equally harmful to people. Excerpts:

**There are reports that indoor air can sometimes be more polluted than outdoor air. What's your perspective on this and what factors contribute to indoor air pollution?**

While outdoor air pollution often gets more attention because it is visible, indoor air pollution can sometimes be just as concerning, and in certain situations, even more concentrated. This is because outdoor pollutants such as vehicle emissions and dust can easily enter our homes through doors, windows, and small gaps, and once inside, they tend to linger in enclosed spaces with limited ventilation. At the same time, many everyday household activities contribute to indoor pollution. Cooking, cleaning with chemical-based products, lighting candles or incense, and even the movement of people can release fine particles and gases into the air.

Since most people spend up to 90% of their time indoors sleeping, working, and relaxing, this largely invisible pollution can result in prolonged exposure.

**How can indoor air pollution be effectively managed? Do you believe air purifiers are the only solution, or are there other important measures?**

Managing indoor air pollution effectively requires a layered approach rather than relying on a single solution. The first step is reducing the sources of pollution indoors and keeping dust under control through regular cleaning. Ventilation also plays an important role by opening windows when outdoor air quality is better. However, ventilation alone isn't always enough, especially in urban environments where outdoor pollution can easily enter homes. This is where air purifiers play an important role. Dyson's latest purifiers are designed to tackle the full spectrum of indoor pollution, from ultrafine particles like PM10 and PM2.5 to gases such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and nitrogen dioxide ($NO_2$), which enter from traffic or are released during cooking and cleaning. Our machines use fully sealed HEPA H13-grade filtration systems that effectively capture 99.95% of particles as small as 0.1 microns.

**What practical steps can households that don't have air purifier take to reduce or control indoor air pollution?**

If someone doesn't have an air purifier at home, one can still take practical steps to reduce indoor air pollution. Keep the home a shoe-free zone and use microfibre doormats to stop dust and outdoor pollutants at the door. Opt for no- or low-VOC cleaning products and avoid synthetic fragrances to limit indoor pollutants. Ventilate the home during times when outdoor air is cleaner, like early mornings and late evenings, and use exhaust fans to manage humidity and fumes. While these measures can make a difference, an air purifier is the most effective way to ensure cleaner air, especially in cities with variable pollution.

**What key factors should consumers consider when purchasing an air purifier?**

When buying an air purifier, it's important to look beyond what's visible. Indoor pollutants like ultra-fine particles can easily go unnoticed but can reach deep into our lungs and even enter bloodstream. That's why filtration really matters. Coverage and airflow circulation also influence performance. A purifier may purify the air around it, but if it pushes clean air only upwards or in single direction, it won't distribute purification evenly. Size and portability are practical considerations too. For smaller rooms and bedrooms, compact and lightweight machines make everyday use more convenient. The Dyson HushJet™ exemplifies this approach; its slim, compact form factor and lightweight build make it easy to place on bedside tables, study desks or smaller living areas. For consumers, the ideal purifier is one that quietly and efficiently cleans the space they live in, without taking up room, demanding constant attention, or compromising comfort.

**Could you explain the importance of after-sales service, long-term performance, and filter lifecycle when choosing and maintaining an air purifier?**

Buying an air purifier is an investment, so it's important to ensure it works efficiently over time. When filters get clogged, the machine has to work harder, putting extra strain on its components, which can lead to repairs or even the need for a replacement unit. Changing the filter every 12 months or sooner if needed, keeps the purifier running as designed, maintaining strong airflow and effective cleaning, while also saving money in the long term. The filter lifecycle is central to both performance and cost. Filters gradually lose efficiency as they trap particles and gases, and delaying replacement can allow pollutants to bypass the system and stress the purifier's motor and electronics. Using genuine replacement filters helps preserve both efficiency and warranty coverage. With the Dyson HushJet™ Purifier Compact, the advanced 360° electrostatic filter is engineered to last up to five years, and the machine provides filter alerts via the display or the My-Dyson™ app, so users always know when it's time to replace filters, ensuring consistent, long-term performance.

Samsung is exploring an upgrade platform like the Galaxy Forever Plan for its home appliances. The Galaxy Forever Plan offers lower EMIs on premium devices by guaranteeing a buyback value of 40-50%

GOOGLE AND APPLE JOIN HANDS ON AI
2026
Apple Intelligence, including a long-awaited and major overhaul of Siri, expected to roll out from 2026.

# WHAT THE DEAL MEANS AND WHY IT MATTERS

IN a major development in the global tech industry, rivals Apple and Google have come together to share artificial intelligence (AI) technology. According to a joint statement, Apple will integrate Google's Gemini AI models into its next generation of foundation models. These models will power Apple Intelligence, including a long-awaited and major overhaul of Siri, expected to roll out from 2026.

As per Counterpoint Research, the partnership is structured like a licensing agreement. Google will provide Apple with a customised and updated version of Gemini, designed specifically for Apple's needs. This version will likely be optimised to answer questions and perform reasoning tasks efficiently, without running the full Gemini model, which would be extremely expensive and resource-intensive.

### Why Apple is turning to Google

Apple has been widely seen as lagging in the AI race, especially when compared to companies like Google, Microsoft, and OpenAI. Siri, Apple's voice assistant, has faced repeated delays and criticism for not keeping up with smarter, more conversational AI systems. At the Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC 2024), Apple showcased a more context-aware Siri, but users are still waiting for it to become a reality.

According to Counterpoint Research, expectations are rising as AI moves towards agentic AI, where voice assistants can understand context, plan tasks, and act independently. In the future, voice-based interaction could become the main way people use smart devices.

For Apple, a powerful and intelligent Siri is no longer optional—it is essential. While details of the deal are still limited, early signs suggest it is a win-win for both companies.

### A boost for Apple Intelligence

Apple's difficulty in building a competitive large language model (LLM) has been discussed for the past two years. A key reason is Apple's strong focus on user privacy, which limits how much data it can use to train AI models. This approach sets Apple apart from Google, whose business relies heavily on collecting and analysing vast amounts of data. Despite falling behind in AI, Apple has remained commercially strong and topped global smartphone shipments in calendar year 2025. However, 2026 could be a turning point. Google's Gemini models are gaining strong mindshare, with more real-world use cases and rapid improvements.

This partnership helps Apple answer growing concerns from investors about its AI strategy. It could also help the company attract AI talent, which has increasingly been drawn to firms leading in generative AI.

At the same time, Apple faces a risk. If Gemini-powered features on iPhones are not clearly differentiated from those on Android, Apple could lose its competitive edge. To avoid this, Apple will need to ensure that the AI experience on iOS feels unique and deeply integrated into its ecosystem.

Importantly, this partnership does not mean Apple is giving up on building its own AI models. Instead, it buys Apple time to catch up while continuing to develop in-house solutions—a strategy Apple has used successfully in the past.

A validation for Gemini

According to Counterpoint Research, for Google, the deal is a major endorsement. Apple is the world's largest consumer-facing technology company, and its adoption of Gemini gives Google a powerful stamp of approval. The partnership also means Gemini could soon be running on hundreds of millions of Apple devices, giving Google instant scale. This strengthens Google's position in negotiations around Gemini's deployment on Android and across other platforms.

In practice, Gemini is expected to handle complex tasks such as reasoning, planning, and summarisation in the background, while Apple continues to market the user-facing experience as Apple Intelligence. Apple's branding will remain front and centre, and Google is unlikely to seek visible credit—scale and influence may be reward enough.

### Privacy will be critical

In their joint statement, Apple and Google said that "Apple Intelligence will continue to run on Apple devices and Private Cloud Compute, while maintaining Apple's industry-leading privacy standards." This suggests Google will not have access to users' personal data.

# Cars are getting smarter and learning to think for themselves

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

NOT long ago, technology in Indian cars meant a music system with Bluetooth and maybe steering-mounted controls. Today, the car cabin is fast turning into a digital command centre — connected, software-driven and increasingly intelligent. From mass-market hatchbacks to premium SUVs, electronics and code are now as critical as engines and suspensions.

This transformation has unfolded in layers, reflecting both India's unique market needs and global automotive trends.

### From mirrors to minds: First digital leap

Over the past five years, Indian cars have gone through what industry executives describe as a "catch-up phase". Analogue dials gave way to digital clusters, and basic stereos were replaced by touchscreens that mirror smartphones through Android Auto and Apple CarPlay.

For many buyers, this shift was seismic. The dashboard became valuable not for how it looked, but for how well it replicated the phone in their pocket. Navigation, music, calls and messages moved onto the screen, improving safety while keeping familiarity intact. Real-time vehicle tracking, remote locking and geo-fencing — often bundled under connected-car packages — added another layer of reassurance.

Cars like the Toyota Innova Crysta reflect this phase clearly: robust mechanical platforms enhanced with digital convenience, rather than rebuilt around software.

### Next phase: Car becomes the device

Globally, and increasingly in India's premium segments, the story has moved beyond mirroring phones. Luxury brands such as BMW are positioning the car itself as a smart device — one with its own digital identity, cloud connection and update cycle.

With systems like BMW ConnectedDrive, the vehicle no longer depends on a smartphone to access intelligence.

A built-in SIM allows real-time navigation, diagnostics and services directly from the cloud. Over-the-air (OTA) updates can improve performance, add features or refine safety systems years after purchase — a radical departure from the idea that a car is "fixed" at the time of sale.

The interaction has changed too. Instead of rigid voice commands, drivers can speak naturally to the car, asking it to adjust climate settings or find a restaurant along the route. The car listens, learns and responds — less like a machine, more like a digital assistant on wheels.

### Mainstream India catches up — fast

What's notable is how quickly this intelligence is filtering down into mass-market vehicles. Mahindra's newly unveiled XUV 7XO is a strong example. Its cabin is dominated by three large 12.3-inch HD screens forming a single panoramic display. But the real story lies beneath the glass. Powered by a Qualcomm Snapdragon automotive chipset — similar to those used in premium global cars — the system supports high-speed graphics, multitasking and future OTA updates. Features such as embedded Alexa with ChatGPT, smartwatch connectivity, immersive Dolby Atmos audio, and a 540-degree camera system indicate a shift in thinking: the dashboard is no longer an accessory, but the brain of the vehicle.

Electronics also play a central role in safety. Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) — once reserved for luxury cars — are now appearing in mainstream SUVs, acting as digital co-pilots that monitor lanes, traffic, blind spots and potential collisions.

Hyundai's latest Creta shows how software is becoming a core pillar of vehicle design. Its SmartSense ADAS suite uses cameras and sensors to actively assist drivers, on highways and at junctions. Visual aids such as blind-spot video feeds and surround-view cameras further extend the driver's awareness.

As software takes the driver's seat, the smartest cars in India may soon be defined not by horsepower, but by how intelligently they fit into everyday life.

Modren lights



Live location

TECHNOLOGY BUZZ

## HARMAN launches four new technologies

HARMAN, a wholly owned subsidiary of Samsung Electronics, has unveiled four production-ready technologies aimed at improving the in-car experience at its HARMAN Explore 2026 event. These innovations are designed to help carmakers deliver safer, smarter, and more personalised vehicles. One of the key highlights is personalised audio technology, which allows passengers to enjoy individual or shared listening experiences. New features such as Ready StreamShare let occupants connect their personal devices and wireless headphones, making it easier to listen together or separately without disturbance.

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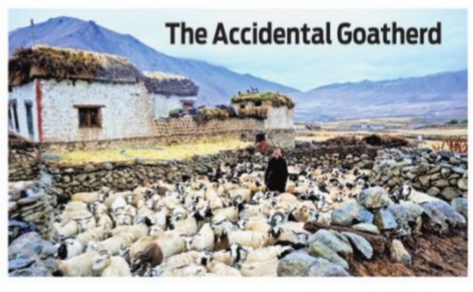

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